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EDITORIAL

THE X, Y, Z AFFAIR

TO: Z
FROM: Y
RE: X

My client Mr. X instructed me to contact you regarding your article in the Winter issue of *Daedalus*. We congratulate you on your perspicacity in choosing the pseudonym "Z." Using "X" for his 1947 article in *Foreign Affairs* was one of the most brilliant career moves Mr. X, *a k a* George Kennan, ever made. A good pseudonym gives one's ideas a cachet, a mystique. And if they turn out to be wrong, one can always deny authorship.

What disturbs my client, however, is your appropriation of his literary property, namely, his concept of "containment." You purport to be advancing an original thesis when you predict that Mikhail Gorbachev will fall from power because a Marxist-Leninist state is incapable of self-reform. But your real message is that the United States should continue policies of cold war containment.

Mr. Kennan clearly created the idea of containment in his *Foreign Affairs* article, arguing that an expansionist Soviet Union threatened the security of the West. Although he has long since abandoned containment as a theory, he has never relinquished his copyright on it. Your appropriation of the original idea therefore constitutes plagiarism.

The fact that most of the Western media has for some time been speculating obsessively about the prospects for Gorbachev's downfall is no extenuation. In the area of amateur Kremlinology the press has from time immemorial focused on who's up and who's down in Moscow as a way of diverting attention from the real issue of the political, social and economic forces at play. But that venerable journalistic ritual gives you no license to steal my client's pseudonym, appropriate his idea and sell it under a spurious initial.

CONNECTICUT WIRETAP SCANDAL
Bruce Shapiro

GERMANY REUNITES
Norman Birnbaum

NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS
David MacMichael

KICKING OUT PALESTINIANS
Eve Pell

FEMINISM AND FILM
Martha Gever

NELSON ALGREN
Earl Shorris

THE STUART CASE

RACE, CLASS AND MURDER IN BOSTON

ANDREW KOPKIND

Murder is war on a very small scale, and like great battles, a single slaying can define and focus the history of its time. What has become known as the Stuart murder case (a headline that hardly begins to describe its layers of meaning) is a paradigm of late-century American popular pathology, a pre-eminent social parable that links rampant racism, pervasive sexism, media sensationalism, class competition, political opportunism, corrupt justice, repression, tribalism, narcissism, greed—and much, much more. Not really an American tragedy (there are no flawed heroes or fallen ideals), the Stuart saga is essentially a case of bad attitudes and morbid symptoms in a society turned too tabloid to be tragic.

The murder of Carol Stuart, now attributed to her husband, Charles, perhaps with the help of accessories or conspirators still to be named, fits as many categories of plot as there are critics and commentators. Connie Chung, on her low-rated Saturday night television "magazine," presented it as a "hoax" in a package with the story of a woman who, as a prank, told reporters she had won the New York lottery. That made as much sense as linking the deaths of John Kennedy and Billy Martin as traffic accidents.

The New York Times, as well as several Boston columnists, bracketed the Stuart murder with the Tawana Brawley case, narrowing the hoax to a racial accusation. But that ignored the vast power differential between the two incidents. When Chuck Stuart described a black man as the murderer, the white authorities in Boston sent a small army of

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EXCHANGE.

CHARTER REVISIONISM

New York City

Robert Fitch's article "Making New York City Safe for Plutocracy" [Dec. 11, 1989] is not about the new city charter but about wild conspiracy theories. It is filled with errors of fact and with misleading omissions. It does not merit a full response. I will limit myself to a few points largely arising from Fitch's telephone interview with me which, I would hazard, came after he had submitted his piece.

Fitch asked me to confirm what, by his tone, appeared to be an accusation of mortal sin: that I had represented the Ford Foundation. "Once" was the answer, twenty-four years before. Of course, in light of Fitch's thesis that foundations—apparently as a monolithic and malicious bloc—are somehow linked to the "plutocrat" real estate interests, it might have been interesting to note that the suit pitted the foundation against a real estate developer.

This seemingly irrelevant question appeared to exhaust Fitch's interest in obtaining facts from me. Responding to my suggestion of irrelevancy, Fitch segued to an attack on the charter's contract reforms. Nowhere in his article does he note, as I told him, that these make it harder for contractors to get sole source contracts. Nor did Fitch report that the State Commission on Government Integrity praised the commission's contract reforms as aiding the city to "make wise purchases of goods and services, using coherent, state-of-the-art procedures that will themselves lessen the opportunities for fraud and corruption."

Similarly, Fitch somehow concluded it irrelevant to his thesis about the adverse effects of the charter upon city workers that District Council 37, the largest union of city workers—primarily lower income minority workers—was, as I told him, an active supporter of the charter changes.

Fitch says I insisted on the right to name the other three new members to the fifteen-member commission. That isn't true, nor what I told him. What I said to the Mayor was that I supported strongly the addition of two more minority members, and I suggested one specific name: Brooklyn's Bishop Joseph Sullivan. The reason I proposed his name is also unmentioned by Fitch and hardly fits his thesis: Joe Sullivan is, as I told Fitch, unusually knowledgeable about poverty and concerned about improving race relations in New York.

Fitch writes fiction in claiming that whenever Mayor Koch or *The Times* "signaled disapproval" of a proposed charter provision, we "stayed up all night" to remove the "offending passages." The lie is given to this by comparison of the commission's recommendations with all the *Times* editorials and all the letters to the commission from the Mayor.

We were, of course, pleased ultimately to get the endorsement of both *The Times* and Mayor Koch as well as of the *Daily News*, *Newsday*, *The Village Voice*, *The Westsider*, *The Queens Tribune* and other publications, and of Ruth Messinger, the Rev. Calvin Butts, The New York City Partnership, the New York Public Interest Research Group, Laura Blackburne of the New York State N.A.A.C.P., Victor Marrero, Claire Schulman, the Citizens Union, Stanley Hill, the League of Women Voters, Carol Bellamy, former Mayors Wagner and Lindsay, Peter Vallone, the Natural Resources Defense Council, then-Representative Guy Molinari, Velmanette Montgomery, Oliver Koppell, Stanley Fink and many others. Would Fitch find all these diverse people and papers, who had often been at odds with one another, part of his "plutocrat" conspiracy? Similarly, how would Fitch go on to explain opposition to the charter from *Crain's New York Business*, or developer Lew Rudin, or the *New York Post*, or Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden? Of course, there were other opponents that Fitch would type as progressive, and supporters he would presumably lump with his villains, but the mix is utterly inconsistent with his demonology.

Charter revision was too important, and the reasoning of its supporters and its opponents too sophisticated, to be trivialized by the foolish, incoherent and erroneous meanderings of Robert Fitch.

Frederick A.O. Schwarz Jr.
Chair, New York City
Charter Revision Commission

FITCH REPLIES

New York City

F.A.O. Schwarz must think he's at the family store, selling Nintendo to kids or giving orders to stockboys. "Nowhere in his article does he note, as I told him," Schwarz pouts, "that these [contract reforms] make it harder for contractors to get sole source contracts." That the chair of the Charter Revision Commission approves of his handiwork is not news. During our conversation, I asked Schwarz to defend his position on contracts with some reasons. He didn't then, and he doesn't now. As I'll explain shortly, the fact is that the new charter does not make it any harder for contractors to get sole source contracts. That is why all the endorsements in the world from fellow board members, from grantees of the funds Schwarz administers and from other members of the permanent government don't amount to Parcheesi.

If Cyrus Vance—director of General Dynamics, Manufacturers Hanover, *The New York Times*, former chair of the Rockefeller Foundation—and his colleagues on the Commission on Government Integrity say so, Schwarz's reasoning goes, who are you to argue? We're supposed to be convinced not because of what the charter says but because of what he says or what his fellow permanent government types on other blue ribbon commissions say.

Let's look at what the new charter says and compare it with what the old one said. Basically, the old charter said that sole source bidding was O.K. if the city's corporation counsel and comptroller said it was. Not much protection there. But what does the new one say? That a city agency can award a contract to whomever it wants if the Mayor writes a letter saying "that it is in the best interests of the city." This makes it harder? I think it makes it easier. Now you need only one official instead of two. But as one city official with responsibility for contract administration observes, "You could have driven a truck through the loopholes of the old one. You can still drive a truck through the new one."

Schwarz, the head of two big nonprofit contractors, has earned the Al D'Amato Medal of Distinction in Government Contracting for three main accomplishments: first, for the provisions that encourage "contracting out" on behalf of nonprofit contractors, discussed in my article. Second, for the systematic weakening of anticorruption features of the old charter: raising the threshold for public hearings; expanding the contracts that can be let on an "emergency basis"; expanding the category of "prequalified" contractors; and allowing the competitive bidding process to be undermined by establishment of new "special cases" where such bidding is "not advantageous" to the city. And finally, for drastically narrowing the number of elected officials who vet contracts and for creating a Mayor-appointed board in their place.

An episode that has recently come to light may explain some of Schwarz's impatience with the elected officials of the old Board of Estimate. During the summer and fall of 1989, Schwarz's Vera Institute of Justice tried and failed to get Board of Estimate approval for a $4.4 million transportation contract with the Human Resources Administration, headed then by former Ford Foundation senior program officer William Grinker. The board turned down the contract because (a) it would have taken away nearly 100 jobs from city workers represented by District Council 37 and given them to Vera-screened convicts; (b) Vera was going to charge $80 a trip for short hops; (c) Vera didn't have trucks, so the contract called for the city to put up $475,000 so Vera could lease them. Vera finally got the contract when the H.R.A. reformulated the contract—now up to $4.9 million—as a non-sole source contract and only one other company bid on it. But the Department of Investigation has

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EDITORIALS.

Junking Campeau

Give me a place to stand and a lever, said Archimedes, and I will move the earth.

In the 1980s, Wall Street exploited Archimedes' principle with a vengeance. A place to stand was provided by the Reagan Administration and its laissez-faire ideology. Government regulation, the gurus said, had stifled the market, which, by definition, could do no wrong because excess was self-correcting. Left to their own devices, Wall Street's creative minds invented the lever, also known as debt, i.e., using other people's money. This powerful confluence of deregulation and debt resulted in one of the greatest movements of financial assets in American history, easily rivaling the great trusts built up at the turn of the century and the conglomeration fever of the 1960s.

But the era of speculation's friend in the White House has gone on to richer rewards, and one of its key figures, Michael Milken, godfather of the junk bond, is now under

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indictment. Dozens of highly leveraged corporations are peering over the precipice; they don't have the cash to keep operating and pay off the debt they have incurred.

The most recent manifestation of the corporate debt crisis, of course, is the $11.4 billion bankruptcy of the Campeau retailing empire. The notion that highly leveraged deals could work in retailing—which keeps so much money tied up in inventory—was nonsensical from the start. But Robert Campeau and the profit-greedy Wall Street bankers, lawyers and brokers who helped assemble his empire shoved facts aside in their collective frenzy to make a deal.

Why should the rest of us care that Campeau has lost control of his ill-conceived empire, or that some holders of unsecured bonds are getting 11 cents on the dollar, or that the Bloomingdale's management is demoralized?

We should care because such bad deals frequently result in lost jobs. Less than two months after acquiring Federated Department Stores in April 1988, Campeau eliminated more than 6,000 employees in an effort to reduce costs. Furthermore, companies staggering under a huge debt load typically reduce their capital expenditures. That means reduced investment and demand in the economy as a whole, so that windfall profits can be skimmed in a short time by a few.

There is another downside to this frenzied finance—social opportunity costs. No one has described it better than Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady in Congressional testimony last year. "I have a growing feeling," said Brady, "that we are headed in the wrong direction when so much of our young talent and the nation's financial resources are aimed at financial engineering while the rest of the world is laying the foundation for the future." While Wall Street raises huge pools of capital to finance paper transactions, Japan's stock market churns out record levels of fresh capital to invest in new plants, equipment and technologies.

John Maynard Keynes once observed that a layer of speculation over a steady stream of enterprise is unavoidable. But when speculation replaces enterprise, it's evidence of a malfunctioning market. It will be no small task for the Bush Administration to correct the disregard for capital, both human and financial, that plagues the American economy. But first it will have to recognize that the free market has as much resemblance to reality as the frictionless plane.

Drugbusters!

Now that the cold war is subsiding, Hollywood is scrambling to find a substitute for *Rambo*, *Red Dawn* and all the other better-dead-than-Red productions that proliferated in the 1980s. A glimpse of the future appeared on NBC the other week in the form of *Drug Wars: The Camarena Story*, a docudrama about Kiki Camarena, the Drug Enforcement Administration agent who was kidnapped and murdered in Mexico in 1985. The usual America-against-the-world trappings were here, updated for the 1990s: In the place of stolid Russians, we had sleazy Mexicans; instead of sadistic commissars, we had ruthless drug traffickers; instead of Communism, cocaine. For six hours spread over three nights, clean-cut American agents battled shifty, unshaven Mexicans, who had bad teeth and a habit of throwing beer bottles from speeding cars. Ivan the Terrible was replaced by Juan the Dirtball.

As entertainment, *Drug Wars* was not bad. Based on *Desperados*, by Elaine Shannon, the miniseries effectively recounts one of the most tragic and agonizing episodes in the history of American drug enforcement. Camarena was among the D.E.A.'s most dedicated agents in Mexico. Based in Guadalajara, he was captured by local drug barons and their allies in the police and military. To find out what the D.E.A. knew about them, they tortured Camarena, then killed him. The Mexicans staged a cover-up, but the D.E.A. pressed on, eventually revealing a conspiracy that reached the highest levels of the Mexican government. *Drug Wars*, produced by Michael Mann of *Miami Vice* fame, has few dull moments.

Unfortunately, in the course of the telling, some highly distorted signals were sent out. One is that all Mexicans are corrupt. Of the dozens and dozens of Mexicans who appeared in the docudrama, virtually all are on the take. In another spurious theme, Mexico is held up as the primary source of U.S. drug woes ("It's a chemical war waged against our people," proclaims one D.E.A. agent/hero). Most serious of all, *Drug Wars* makes the case for a more activist U.S. policy in Latin America, spearheaded by the D.E.A. The series is essentially an extended advertisement for the drug agency (which provided guidance to the producers). Just as that old TV series *The FBI* buffed the image of J. Edgar Hoover's G-men, *Drug Wars* seeks to win the D.E.A. a larger constituency.

Yet the miniseries was a model of balance compared with the special news segments that NBC broadcast after each of the three episodes. As a docudrama, *The Drug Wars* took many liberties with the truth, but Tom Brokaw accepted it all as fact, using the series as a springboard for bashing Mexico and urging tough American action. There was "a lot of evidence that corruption went all the way to the top in Mexico," Brokaw declared in an exchange with Representative Charles Rangel. "Do you think the U.S. should have launched some military operation in Mexico at that time?"

Two nights later, drug czar William Bennett told Brokaw that the Mexicans were doing a better job. "But they have a long way to go," said Brokaw, who, returning to his favorite theme, asked, "In the Kiki Camarena case, if President Bush were in office, do you think he would have sent American troops into Mexico?" Both Rangel and Bennett rejected Brokaw's suggestion.

Even more unhinged was the "report" offered by correspondent Brian Ross. "American authorities say, just like Panama, drug corruption in Mexico remains deep and pervasive, and, in almost every part of that country, there is a local Noriega, a *comandante*, a general, a governor getting rich dealing with Colombian drug bosses, that move their cocaine through Mexico into the United States," he stated. "For all the promises of the new Mexican president," Ross added, "Mexican authorities still will not allow American

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search planes to pursue big drug smugglers over the border into Mexico." No messy questions about national sovereignty here.

The line separating fact from fiction disappeared altogether one night when Brokaw showed a clip from an upcoming episode. In it D.E.A. head Jack Lawn—or rather, an actor playing Jack Lawn—heroically tells his agents that the D.E.A. will pay any price, bear any burden, to get to the bottom of the case. When the clip ends, Brokaw reappears to introduce "the real Jack Lawn," who goes on to explain how we're winning the war on drugs. It's a surreal moment, rivaling the scene in *Annie Hall* in which Woody Allen, waiting in line to see *The Sorrow and the Pity*, introduces the real Marshall McLuhan. In pursuing the war on drugs, newscasting is descending into farce.

In the end, the most disturbing thing about *The Drug Wars* is the way it diverts people from the real source of the cocaine crisis, which is America's bottomless appetite for the drug. Programs like this feed the notion that we can lick our drug problem simply by sending troops to Panama, warships to Colombia, and more D.E.A. agents to Mexico. None of that, in fact, is likely to have the slightest impact on the amount of cocaine entering the United States. The real tragedy of the drug war is that brave agents like Kiki Camarena are sent abroad on life-threatening missions that have no real chance of success. MICHAEL MASSING

Michael Massing is contributing editor of Columbia Journalism Review.

Boston

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

occupation into the black neighborhoods. Police invaded the housing projects of Mission Hill, knocking down doors, bursting into apartments, slamming and insulting residents. White cops taunted the terrified people: "Where's the nigger with the trigger?" Young black men were stopped, searched and detroused on the street for no cause more reasonable than their skin color. The cops called the blacks "pussy" and "faggot," and sexual humiliation—white male power against black male impotence—became another disgusting tactic of the occupation. In short order, a likely suspect named Willie Bennett (cf. Willie Horton) was located and evidence produced to get him into a lineup, where Stuart identified him as his assailant. No comparable repression of the white community in New York State followed Brawley's charge that white cops had brutalized her.

In Boston, the media went certifiably berserk. There was nothing else in the papers for weeks. Television provided live coverage of Carol Stuart's funeral, with the ultraconservative Cardinal, Bernard Law, officiating, lame duck Governor Michael Dukakis and Mayor Raymond Flynn, a gubernatorial hopeful, leading the official mourning, and the entire roster of local political leaders in attendance. Once in the ground, Carol was almost completely forgotten. Even after Chuck became a "suspect" in her killing, the category of violence against women was not prominently applied, except by the daily papers' three female columnists. It's far more likely that the murderer of a woman in Massachusetts will be her husband or boyfriend than a robber who enters her car—or her house. But somehow interspousal murder is less gripping to media managers than is interracial, interclass homicide.

Anyone with a pen or a PC (which in literate Massachusetts is almost everyone) mongered an opinion, invited or not. Liberals diagnosed the social malaise of the ghetto (cf. the pathology of the black family) as the root cause of the murder, and prescribed increased funding for programs to combat poverty, drugs and crime. Conservatives suggested that a permanent, intractable criminal underclass infests minority neighborhoods, and they demanded more jail cells and police protection. Republican leaders in the State House urged immediate reinstatement of the death penalty. Democrats, who control both the city and state, busied themselves with damage control.

Some whites argued that the search-and-destroy tactics were "strong medicine," which was for the blacks' own good. "It may be true that this crime focused our attention because this time it was one of us bleeding in the street," a woman from a suburb south of the city wrote in *The Boston Globe*. "The massive police response no doubt came from the outrage of a public broader than a single city neighborhood. . . . Roxbury [synecdoche for "black people"] will still benefit from the police sweep."

Some black leaders were offended by Mayor Flynn's "aggressive" police penetration of their community, while others (including a number on the Flynn payroll) internalized white fear and loathing and agreed it was for their own good, much as certain leaders of a poor and despised country welcome imperial invaders. But the mood in the projects was sullen and resentful. "It's always us black people who suffer, no matter what," a woman told a television interviewer. There was clearly no agreement on who "us" were in Boston.

Despite the liberal cast that Boston assumes, the place is a racial nightmare. White ethnics fought school integration so viciously that a Federal court took over the system for years. Ray Flynn was a segregationist *capo* in Southie in those days. Michael Dukakis, in his first term as Governor, cravenly ducked the issue. Segregation in public housing is worse than in the schools, occasioning more Federal judicial intervention, and although Flynn turned around on public integration issues as his political ambitions rose, he still refuses to let blacks, Latinos or Asians (who together make up 45 percent of the population) make decisions in his administration. Mayor Flynn's inner circle of six is all white and all male, and tribalism keeps an iron grip on power. Here's a partial list of principals in the Stuart case: Flynn, Police Commissioner Francis ("Mickey") Roache, Cardinal Law, District Attorney Newman Flanagan and Judge Constance Sweeney (who accepted the affidavit concocted by police to incriminate Willie Bennett).

Flynn, who says he'll decide for sure in a month or so whether to run for governor, has refused to apologize to the Mission Hill neighborhood (the epicenter of the police inva-

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sion) and the black community in general for the calumnies and the brutality. "We're all guilty," he says. (What is Mission Hill guilty of, other than the crime of "I-wouldn't-put-it-past-them"?) He wants to be a "healer" and hopes that he can funnel some funds into Mission Hill to combat crime, drugs, poverty and the general low life that white Bostonians still believe, somehow, killed Carol Stuart.

Chuck Stuart sought to rise to Back Bay gentility (he was a $100,000-a-year manager of a fur boutique on the best shopping street in town) from the bars and backyard basketball courts of Revere, an all-white, working-class suburb where Irish, Jewish and Italian immigrants landed a century ago. He lied about his life (he never went to Brown, as he claimed, but learned short-order cooking at a vocational high school) and his love for Carol DiMaiti. A bright, well-educated tax lawyer with considerable earning power, she was useful to him for a while. But she got pregnant and that seemed to threaten his plans for advancement into restaurant ownership, a Revere boy's dream. It was the same season—probably the same week—that Sam was trying to buy Cheers, on Channel 4. So why not "do" Carol (in the native lingo) and blame it on the blacks? It's a local tradition.

UNCIVIL LIBERTIES.

CALVIN TRILLIN

What is now widely spoken of as George Bush's political triumph in Panama merely confirms a theory of presidential popularity I have been working on for some time: The best thing a President can do for his approval rating is to stage a very large invasion of a very small country.

Ronald Reagan taught us that in October of 1983. It wasn't so obvious then. For generations, after all, it had been part of our heritage that the American people, with their ingrained sense of fair play, always like to root for the underdog. Who would know that the way to impress them was to send the U.S. Army to conquer Grenada, population 87,000? Ronald Reagan knew it instinctively—displaying, as usual, the sort of uncanny ability when it came to gauging public opinion that Dustin Hoffman displayed in *Rain Man* when it came to counting matches.

I know what you're going to argue. You're going to argue that a President's popularity goes up not because of an invasion but because of what it accomplishes—protecting the American medical students who were studying in Grenada, for instance, or arresting a nefarious drug trafficker in Panama.

I'm afraid not. Nobody remembers for long what an invasion accomplished or why it was supposedly undertaken in the first place. Who now remembers that the announced reason for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was the shooting of an Israeli diplomat in London? Among experts, there is widespread agreement that Noriega's arrest will have no effect on the drug trade—except, perhaps, in the reminder that our government was willing to keep a known drug trafficker on its payroll for years. Are you arguing that the next time you show up in an emergency room and find out that you're going to be treated by a doctor who was trained in Grenada you're going to give special thanks to Ronald Reagan? Forget it. What endures in the public mind is that Grenada is a very small country and we conquered it with a very large invasion.

Grenada was apparently the only very small country Ronald Reagan could find that needed invading—although, to give credit where credit is due, not many people knew that Grenada needed invading before Reagan invaded it. He sent soldiers to no middle-sized countries, unless you count Lebanon. Reagan never counted Lebanon. In fact, as soon as a bunch of the people he had sent over there got killed, he quit mentioning Lebanon. I wouldn't be surprised to read in one of these kiss-and-tell books about the Reagan Administration that the White House had maps of the world that didn't show Lebanon at all; in the place where Lebanon is on most maps, Michael Deaver would have drawn a little smile-face and written next to it, "Let's talk about how it's morning again in America."

Poor Jimmy Carter had the theory upside down when he ordered the commando mission that was meant to rescue the U.S. hostages held in Iran. What he did was sponsor a very small invasion of a very large country. Carter apparently was still laboring under the impression that the lesson of Vietnam was that the United States should be wary about involving a large number of its troops in another country. Reagan somehow sensed the real lesson of Vietnam: If you're going to involve a large number of American troops, find a country a lot smaller than Vietnam to invade.

Bush learned the lesson from Reagan. He kept his eyes open for another very small country that needed invading. For all we know about Grenada these days, it might have needed invading again, but Bush, a man known for his prudence, obviously didn't want to see what would happen if a President staged a very large invasion of the very same very small country some other President had invaded. Panama is larger than Grenada, but it is still pretty small. It is, the way I figure it, almost exactly a hundredth the size of the United States. In other words, Panama being invaded by the United States is the equivalent of the United States being invaded by a country of 24 billion people. (Yes, we might still have an edge in military hardware, but think of what a country of 24 billion people could do with human-wave attacks.)

Before everyone forgets why we invaded Panama and what we accomplished there, Bush should take credit for one more thing he managed to accomplish: He put to rest the fears of any Russians who thought that, no matter what we said, we could launch a first strike against their country. It's now obvious that at the rate we're going we wouldn't get to a country the size of Russia for another two or three centuries.

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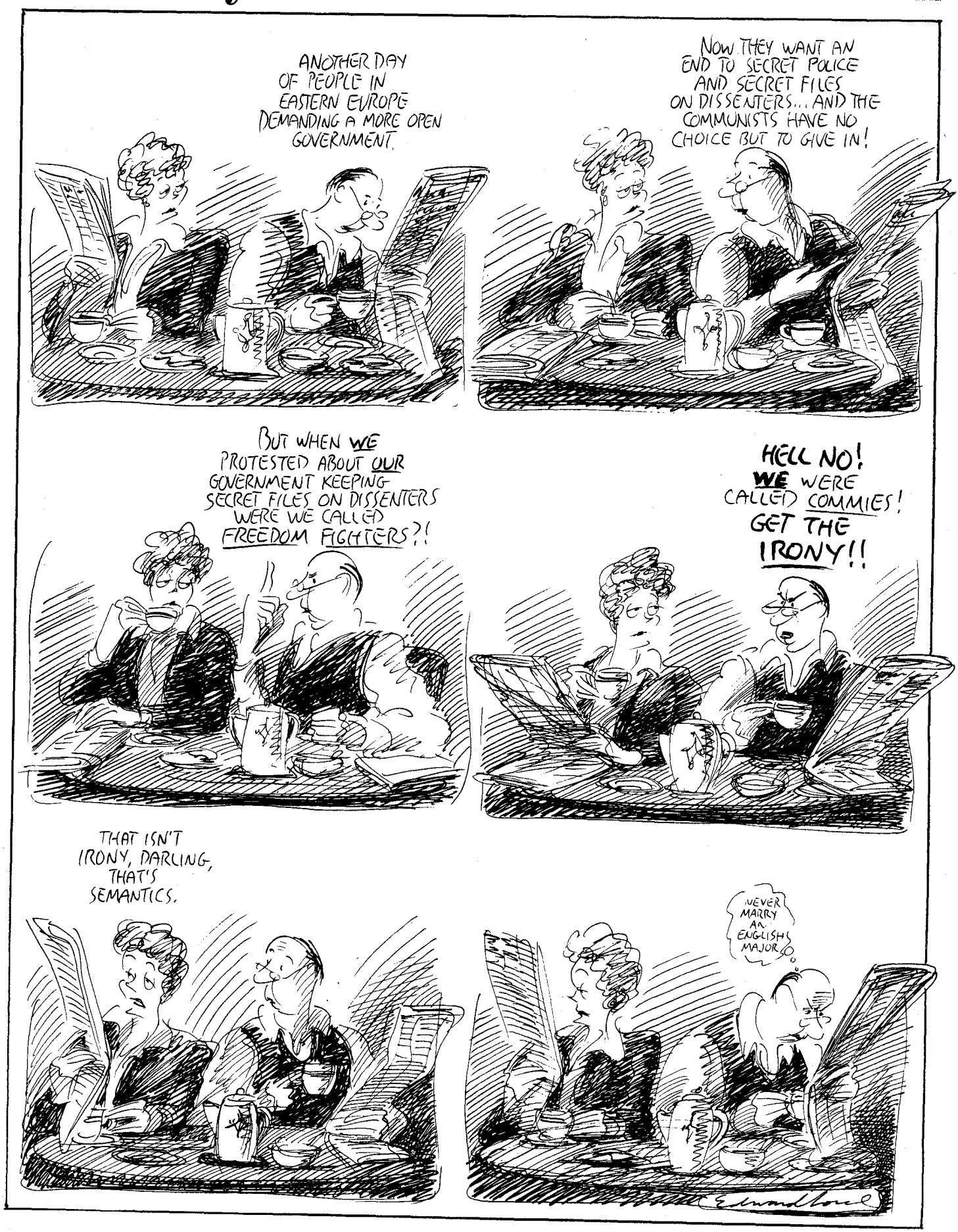
The Irony Curtain

EDWARD SOREL


ANOTHER DAY OF PEOPLE IN EASTERN EUROPE DEMANDING A MORE OPEN GOVERNMENT.
NOW THEY WANT AN END TO SECRET POLICE AND SECRET FILES ON DISSENTERS... AND THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO GIVE IN!
BUT WHEN WE PROTESTED ABOUT OUR GOVERNMENT KEEPING SECRET FILES ON DISSENTERS WERE WE CALLED FREEDOM FIGHTERS?!
HELL NO! WE WERE CALLED COMMIES! GET THE IRONY!!
THAT ISN'T IRONY, DARLING, THAT'S SEMANTICS.
NEVER MARRY AN ENGLISH MAJOR.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Budapest

In a specially consecrated plot in Budapest's main cemetery the five most distinguished graves are the five that, until last year, were at once the most anonymous and the most defamed. Oafishly refusing to learn the lesson of Antigone, the regime of Janos Kadar wasted three decades by refusing to say where Imre Nagy and his fellow combatants of the 1956 October Revolution were interred. Their names could not be mentioned in the press, and their last stand was described as "counterrevolution," even as fascism. When they were properly mourned, named and given decent burial on June 16, 1989, most of the official party *apparat* were among the quarter-million silent mourners. To visit Plot 301 (as it has always been known in *samizdat*) at dusk, and to find the site heaped with fresh flowers and flags and candles, is to see the irreversible and dignified aspect of the slow-motion revolution that Hungary has been undergoing. A detail caught my attention. Nagy's grave is in the center and needs no stone. The markers erected for his four principal comrades—including the brave Gen. Pal Maleter, who refused to turn his troops on the populace—all bear the same birth date. Every headstone reads 1917–1958. Each of these men, all of whom were executed as believing Communists, was born in year one of the Russian Revolution.

When I ask George Konrad whether he really means to say that the whole experience of Communism in this country has been a waste of time, he is significantly and usefully reticent. "Ontologically, no detour can be utterly wasted. No human experience is completely void. Perhaps the values of socialism can only be realized by socialists in a nonsocialist society. Perhaps the search for a third way is not idealistic because we have already found the third way in the idea of Western Europe."

Certainly, it seems to me to be cynical and ahistorical to count the 1956 revolution a waste of time. Its example appears more pregnant and essential with the passage of years. By its coincidence with the Suez invasion and with the false dawn of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, it shattered Communist unanimity and gave birth to the New Left—the first political movement to oppose the cold war as a thing in itself. More recently, by announcing that they would automatically give refuge to anyone leaving Rumania, and by allowing the transit of East German refugees, the Hungarian reformers did much to internationalize the Eastern European revolution and to insure that it was, by and large, peaceful and democratic.

To appreciate the grandeur of the Hungarian resistance is to be very sensitive to anything that might vulgarize it. It was dispiriting to the utmost to see Budapest's Foreign Minister, Gyula Horn, return from an honorable visit to *Rumania Libera* only to greet the Foreign Minister of South Africa. A smirking Roelof Botha announced that such matters as trade links and white emigration to Johannesburg were discussed. In an open session a few weeks before, the Hungarian Parliament had eagerly taken the first offer it got from the I.M.F., as if it would be bad manners to show any reservations. Walking by the Danube after Christmas, I saw a line outside a shop that, properly photographed by *Time*, could have illustrated any banal story about the miseries of Communism. It turned out to be the enormous daily queue for the Adidas store.

Of course it is true that under Kadar the party built Hiltons and sold the work force and the environment to Western concessionaires for hard currency, and did so while retaining a power monopoly. George Konrad told me that the fetishization of Western consumer goods was even more intense when there were fewer of them. And no doubt this is an emotional phase that must be gone through. But there is something uncritical about the cult of the "free market" and of anything that might be termed "Western," just as there was something repulsive in the earlier slavishness toward all things Russian. In Melanesia the islanders watched the Europeans build airstrips and jetties, and saw planes and ships arrive loaded with good things. They too built makeshift airstrips and jetties, hoping by this means to attract the envied riches. This "cargo cult" led to intense disappointment for its practitioners, and not just because they didn't know the difference between production and consumption. So when Hungarians talk about von Hayek as if he had just been discovered, and about unemployment as if it were a new style of exercise therapy, about Thatcher and Bush as if they were innovators, and about South Africa as if it were simply another market economy, one has the dreary sensation of watching a second-rate old movie and of realizing that one knows the ending.

Against this can be set the exhilarating fact that *politics*—not just the consoling consensus of "civil society"—is now possible once again in Hungary. The writer Istvan Eorsi, a leftist imprisoned after 1956, puts it very well in explaining his decision to join the Alliance of Free Democrats (S.D.S.). The S.D.S. is a coalition of neoliberals and neoconservatives for the most part, but it is a thinking organization that contains most of those who suffered in the battle for democratic change. It is denounced by the former ruling party, and by the right-wing populist opposition movement known as Democratic Forum, as being cosmopolitan, elitist and "Trotskyist." (Not much difficulty with the code words there.) As a consequence, the isolated, tough, ironic figures of the Hungarian left have had no choice but to join it. These individuals extend from Laszlo Rajk, son of the executed postwar Communist Prime Minister, to Eorsi, who says, "In the end, I'd rather be comrades with people I trust but don't agree with entirely—we can argue—than with people to whom I'm ideologically close but can't trust." Here is one of the most suggestive consequences of the depoliticization of a country by Stalinists who didn't believe a word of their own uplifting propaganda. Not for the first or the last time in history, the right people have the wrong line. At least that can change.

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ARTICLES.

CONNECTICUT WIRETAP SCANDAL

Are Your Local Police Listening?

BRUCE SHAPIRO

The suspect was hauled into the police barracks. He wasn't told that while calling his attorney he was being taped by a concealed video camera. He wasn't told that the phone call itself, in which he and his lawyer discussed his arrest and a possible courtroom strategy, would be tape-recorded. He wasn't told about the microphone aimed at his holding cell, and he certainly wasn't told that the conference room where he met his lawyer was bugged.

This particular paranoid nightmare was not dreamed up in pre-*perestroika* Prague, and the suspect was no Vaclav Havel. His name was Bobby Little. He was arrested by Connecticut state troopers in August 1988 after running down a woman while driving drunk. All those secret tapings took place in a suburban state police barracks, with the full approval of the state police command.

Since early November 1989 Connecticut has been reeling from the disclosure of a fifteen-year obsession with electronic surveillance by the state police: the illegal taping of virtually every telephone conversation taking place under the state police's own roof, and the bugging of facilities including the state police commander's own office. During the Little trial, George Gombossy and Lynne Tuohy of *The Hartford Courant* reported that between 1974 and 1989 thousands of suspects held in state police barracks were taped in conversations with their attorneys. Rank-and-file state troopers were also victims: Their personal phone calls to spouses, psychiatrists and auto mechanics were taped and their union meetings were bugged. As a matter of official policy, the state's highest-ranking state police commanders ordered every phone call in and out of state police barracks and offices to be taped except two private lines, one for commanders and another for informants. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has been working on the case, and the state police commander was forced to resign. Defense attorneys have filed a class action lawsuit expected to draw at least 4,000 plaintiffs. Nervous Connecticut politicians aren't sure which is worse: an out-of-control police force or the prospect of millions of dollars in court settlements with aggrieved defendants and mistrials for dozens of convicts. And it's a scandal with stunning national implications, with revelations of similar illegal taping practices in more than a dozen other states.

The taping in Connecticut began in 1974. State police officials started recording virtually all calls in and out of thirteen barracks—calls by lawyers, suspects, bail bondspeople, state police officers. Despite reservations expressed by individual state police officials and warnings from legal advisers, the surveillance increased markedly after 1983, when Governor William O'Neill named a career trooper and ex-Marine, Col. Lester Forst, as Commissioner of Public Safety. Sophisticated equipment, purchased in recent years at costs running to hundreds of thousands of dollars, was installed to record simultaneously up to forty phone lines in each state police office and to allow easy scanning for individual conversations. Bugs were placed in attorney-client conference areas, holding cells, Forst's own office and the room where the state police union met. (The union has joined the lawsuit.)

The recording by police of a conference between an attorney and a client is obviously a violation of the basic constitutional right to counsel. And everyone agrees the tapings blatantly violate Federal wiretapping law—Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. That law, adopted in 1968 and strengthened in 1986, imposes minimum damages of $10,000 per victim for taping calls without a warrant. A similar state law calls for a $1,000 minimum fine. And beyond that there are civil damages. For Connecticut—where literally hundreds of thousands of phone calls were taped—the financial implications are staggering. Indeed, some defense attorneys worry that the very magnitude of the case may make a court reluctant to impose an adequate penalty.

These facts are dramatic enough. How it happened is another story, one largely missing from newspaper coverage of the affair. The state police were permitted to run amok by Governor O'Neill, the only official to whom Colonel Forst was accountable by law. Despite the startling revelations of recent months, the state police's willful disregard for privacy has long been an open secret. As long ago as 1983, the Chief Justice of Connecticut's Supreme Court, John Speziale, publicly admonished the troopers for taping conversations between a suspect and his attorney. In this highly publicized case, *State v. Ferrell*, these tape recordings led the Supreme Court to reverse a murder conviction. "Eavesdropping by the police or their agents makes a mockery of the right to consult counsel," Speziale wrote. Despite the seriousness of Speziale's rebuke, there was no initiative by the O'Neill administration to monitor police practice more closely.

The state police also played fast and loose with civil rights in the arena of political protest. In 1983 and 1984-85, in a series of articles in two weekly newspapers, the *New Haven Advocate* and *Fairpress*, I detailed the troopers' aggressive surveillance of political demonstrations: recording license

Bruce Shapiro, former editor of the New Haven Independent, *is a contributor to* Building Bridges: The Emerging Grassroots Coalition of Labor and Community, *forthcoming from Monthly Review Press.*

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numbers at nuclear freeze demonstrations; filing demonstrators' names and photos "for future intelligence forecasts," in the words of a state police document; infiltrating meetings; and videotaping rallies with an eye toward intelligence gathering. The co-chair of the state legislature's judiciary committee asked some tough questions in hearings but got few answers from the troopers under O'Neill's command. A proposal to ban covert political surveillance died in committee.

If snooping on scraggly protesters aroused few complaints, another scandal that broke in 1985 rattled some political cages. It seemed that a police intelligence task force had been gathering information on Chief Justice Speziale himself, filling files with unfounded rumors of the judge's organized crime connections. (State police detectives were angry at Speziale not for his views on phone taping but for earlier criticisms of them in a famous murder trial.) In the subsequent legislative furor it was revealed that the troopers keep such files on no fewer than 29,000 people, some on political activists, some on suspected criminals. When an outspoken chief state's attorney criticized the state police investigative methods, O'Neill wasn't just silent. He publicly backed Forst, touching off a massive turf war that Forst ultimately won. In 1987 a Connecticut state's attorney, John Connelly, publicly criticized the state police for taping two conversations to which he was a party and warned Forst about illegal surveillance—a warning that was ignored once again. As recently as January 1989, a well-publicized report by the Legislature's Program Review and Investigations Committee criticized Forst and other officials for "seeming lack of response" to disclosure of the Connelly taping.

Even after the wiretap scandal broke, O'Neill was slow to act, waiting until Forst returned from a hunting trip to fire him. O'Neill later appointed a committee to investigate the scandal; the committee consisted of his own attorney general—who would have to defend the state in any litigation—his own counsel and the chief state's attorney, who, like Forst, had been singled out for lack of response in the legislative report. The trio issued a hasty, superficial report suggesting that while clearly inappropriate, the taping didn't reflect any intent by state police officials actually to use the tapes improperly.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARGUERITA BORNSTEIN

The case has drawn national concern. At a Capitol Hill hearing on December 18, 1989, members of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property and the Administration of Justice heard of similar taping policies by police departments in New Jersey, Rhode Island, Utah and West Virginia. In at least five other states—Georgia, Indiana, New Mexico, Oregon and Wyoming—prison officials are accused of routinely taping convicts' private phone calls, including their discussions with attorneys. "A clear pattern is emerging around the country," declared an angry Representative Robert Kastenmeier, the subcommittee's chair. After the hearing Kastenmeier revealed to reporters that he had received reports of illicit police tapings in at least nine other states that he couldn't name publicly yet.

A manufacturer and distributor of phone taping equipment, who asks not to be identified, says the revelations so far are just the tip of the iceberg. "I talk to colleagues all the time for whom this police work is big business," he says. "You have many parts of the country where no police have even heard of a beep tone, let alone privacy. It's very common for police to tape every phone call under their roofs. They think it's their right." A phone tape system, says this manufacturer, costs anywhere from $10,000 to $20,000; while most such systems come equipped with beep warning tones, "everyone in the business" knows it's a simple matter to remove a few chips to have warning-free phone taping.

At Kastenmeier's hearing (called at the request of Connecticut Representative Bruce Morrison, a judiciary committee member who plans to challenge O'Neill in a primary) witnesses offered assorted explanations for the wave of tapings. Kastenmeier himself believes the extensive surveillance is related to "invasions of privacy made possible with new technology." Michael Koskoff, a Bridgeport, Connecticut, trial lawyer who is handling the lawsuit, ticked off a list of others: "There's no one to enforce the laws; there are the nudges and smiles among police that go with acquiring this information; there's the profit motive of manufacturers."

James Fyfe, a former police officer who's now an American University law professor, took a more philosophical view. "The technology can be controlled," he asserted. "The motivation really involves our definition of the police job. As long as all we expect is that they'll put the bad guys away, this will continue. We've got to redefine the nature of the police job." To the police, Fyfe observed, illicit taping is not corrupt because "it doesn't make a profit for individual officers."

What about solutions short of the massive public and professional re-education suggested by Fyfe? Koskoff believes the Justice Department should establish a special privacy

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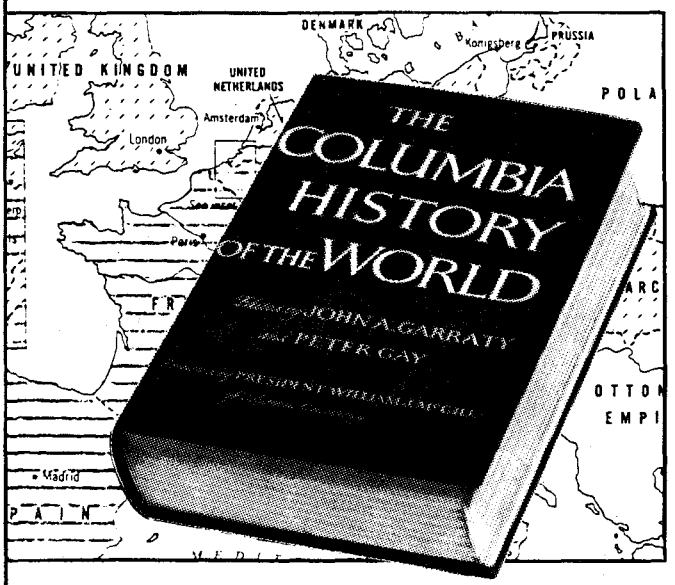

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unit and conduct a national investigation to establish the scope of electronic surveillance. At the hearing, Morrison wondered aloud if adhering to privacy standards should be a condition for receiving Federal law enforcement grants.

If this massive constitutional violation were to drive O'Neill from office, that might be the best preventive medicine. But on O'Neill's home turf there's ample evidence that breaking privacy laws, even when it costs the taxpayers millions, doesn't necessarily hurt a political career. New Haven once had a police chief who in the 1970s ordered widespread illegal wiretaps of political activists. He and the other officials who participated in the wiretapping were caught, and taxpayers ultimately paid out $1.75 million in a court settlement, not to mention legal fees. Although he was caught with his ear to the wiretap recorder, that police chief, Biagio DiLieto, was elected Mayor and held the office for ten years. □

GERMAN REUNIFICATION?

It's Already Happening

NORMAN BIRNBAUM

The world asks if the two German states should be joined and, if so, how and when. The Germans, in both the Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic, are themselves debating the question. But unification from above and below has already begun. It cannot be stopped, or even much delayed.

A torrent of visitors is flooding across the border between the two states in both directions. The largest West German banks and firms are planning investment and joint ventures in East Germany. (Lufthansa and Volkswagen have just announced large projects there.) The West German government is providing financial guarantees for private sector investment, and is itself about to spend heavily on East Germany's telecommunications, railways and roads. West German magazines and newspapers not only circulate in the Democratic Republic; some plan to publish there. Churches and organizations of every kind, local governments in the border areas and universities and research institutes have begun to work together. Supposedly under the authority of the three Western powers, Mayor Walter Momper of West Berlin has initiated a metropolitan commission for the two Berlins and their hinterland without asking leave to do so.

An unlikely couple is presiding over this frenetic activity, or, more precisely, trying to keep up with it. The systematically unsubtle West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, has joined the ascetic and cautious Communist reformer, Prime Minister Hans Modrow of the Democratic Republic, in what is vaguely termed a "contractual community." Kohl seeks unification, and, with an eye to West German elections in December, the faster the better. Modrow wants the Democratic Republic to remain an independent and socialist republic. They have found common ground, however, in seeking to avert the chaos of a collapse of the Democratic Republic. Each, moreover, is aware that Germany has neighbors who are already disturbed by the scale and rate of change in, and between, the two Germanys.

The situation within the Democratic Republic is paradoxical. The revolution was initiated and led by dissident Communists and Socialists, who sought, and seek, an independent state with democratic socialist institutions. Now that the citizenry can express itself, it is entirely unclear that it wants either independence or socialism. A large part of the sentiment for unification in the Democratic Republic has nothing to do with nationalist fervor or demands for geopolitical aggrandizement. It may reflect the desire to live as the West Germans do, as consumers with a high standard of living. These people are convinced that unification is the speediest and surest route to modernizing the economy.

As for socialism, forty years of Stalinist and neo-Stalinist oppression have done their work. One slogan heard frequently in the Democratic Republic is, "No More Experiments." Since none of those advocating democratic socialism can explain how a small socialist state could prosper in the midst of capitalist Europe, the West German model seems compelling to the East Germans. It is also true, however, that millions of citizens of the Democratic Republic are wary of the harsh, competitive aspects of the other German society. That society, though, is very unlike the United States. It provides a dense network of social benefits, and there is a large public investment in social infrastructure, especially education. The groups in the Democratic Republic demanding unification are therefore careful to announce their adherence to the capitalist welfare state of the Federal Republic, which is what a substantial segment of the political right in the Federal Republic also endorses. The least that can be said is that should unification occur, millions of citizens of the Democratic Republic will carry into the new state a large sense of social solidarity and a revulsion for social Darwinism.

For the moment, everything is in flux. The government of the Democratic Republic is made up of reformist Communists, representatives of the former satellite parties of the Socialist Unity Party, and technocrats. The satellite parties include one connected to Hans-Dietrich Genscher's Free Democrats in West Germany and a Christian Democratic Party connected to Kohl's party. The composition of the Parliament is the same as the prerevolutionary one and has little or no authority. The government's policies are scrutinized by an ad hoc round table made up of churches, old and new dissident groups and parties, academics, environmentalists and feminists. Some of the one-time dissident groups draw their inspiration from the West German Greens, and they have recently displayed that party's most self-destructive traits: moral absolutism and political impracticality. An attempted electoral alliance of the newer

Norman Birnbaum, a professor at Georgetown University Law Center and a member of The Nation*'s editorial board, has just returned from Germany.*

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movements and parties promptly fell apart.

The situation in the Democratic Republic is volatile. There is a good deal of social pressure, and sometimes violence, against Communists and ex-Communists. A Protestant pastor whose resistance to the fallen regime began years ago said, "Those who were the most cowardly are now the most aggressive." There are older (and younger) nationalists in the Democratic Republic, and neo-Nazis and skinheads, too. The West German Republicans, a chaotic if energetic assemblage of revanchists, ultrarightists and xenophobes, have been organizing in East Germany. At the demonstrations that are now features of the Democratic Republic's political life, antagonisms between advocates of unification and those backing autonomy threaten to degenerate into serious street clashes. A chasm of distrust divides the round table from Modrow's government. Indeed, the non-Communist parties in the government and the opposition forced Modrow to withdraw a plan to develop a new internal security agency. The working effectiveness of the government remains fragile, as conflicts old and new threaten its ability to last until the May elections. The danger of chaos, then, is acute.

No one can say what will happen between now and the elections scheduled for May 6. The public opinion polls give widely fluctuating predictions. The reformed Communist Party might do rather well, the more so as it has just advanced a reasonable plan for gradual disarmament of the two Germanys and the withdrawal of Western and Soviet troops by the end of the decade. The West German government denounces the Communists for monopolizing the news media and political resources. However, the West German parties and, let it be said, the unions are prodigal with advisers, money and resources for their allies in the Democratic Republic. One important question is how well a newly revived Social Democratic Party will do. The territory of the Democratic Republic is the traditional heartland of German social democracy, and the party should profit from the demise of Stalinism. So far, however, the industrial working class has not come forward to support it.

There will be a national election in the Federal Republic in December, and politics in the two Germanys are, in fact, merging. These days, politicians from the Federal Republic appear in the Democratic Republic more often than in their own constituencies. West German television is an indispensable medium for East German debate.

Is the Federal Republic in the throes, meanwhile, of a nationalist seizure? Kohl seems to think so. In November he promulgated his ten-point plan for unification without consulting either his own coalition partners or the opposition—or the Western allies and the Soviet Union. Criticized and even repudiated for his haste (and for failing to guarantee Germany's acceptance of Poland's western border with Germany), he has since executed an elephantine retreat. His plan, he now says, is only a set of guidelines, not a timetable. While visiting Prime Minister Modrow in Dresden, Kohl did warn the citizenry of the Democratic Republic that unification had to be taken step by step, and he backed Modrow's call for stability. (Some politicians in the Federal Republic, however, appear to be speculating on, if not actually inciting, chaos in the Democratic Republic.) Meanwhile, Kohl has assured the West Europeans that, on his side of the Rhine, there are only good Europeans. In Dresden, he went out of his way to thank Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev for making change in the Democratic Republic possible.

Kohl's primary concern remains keeping the Republican Party out of the next West German Parliament—that is, to under 5 percent of the vote. To accomplish this, he has voiced the accents of an assertive nationalism. His party's General Secretary, Volker Ruehe, once tireless in denouncing the Social Democrats and the peace movement for "neutralist nationalism," now says that unification is no one's business but the Germans'. There is no doubt that the revolution in the Democratic Republic, and the breaching of the wall, have evoked profound emotions in the Federal Republic. It would be absurd to suppose, however, that the majority of West Germans will now abandon parliamentary democracy or integration with Western Europe in the European Community, much less ready themselves for new wars of conquest.

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More than a thousand citizens of the Democratic Republic are still settling daily in the Federal Republic. If these numbers do not diminish, the welfare-state economy of West Germany will be undermined, and the West Germans know this. That is why the probable Social Democratic candidate for Chancellor, Oskar Lafontaine, the Minister President of the Saarland, has chosen to open his campaign on an insistent socioeconomic note. Unification, he says, can come only after social equality and prosperity are guaranteed for both German states.

That much said, Kohl dominates the political scene at the moment. The Federal Republic is prospering. The Social Democrats are in an unenviable starting position. They have no alternative economic policy. They have been unable to exploit their just share of credit for the revolution in the Democratic Republic. Their policy of dialogue with the Communists was seized upon by the East German opposition to demand that the regime begin talks with its own citizens. The Social Democrats, now under attack from the West German right, have put themselves in the impossible position of declaring that they were willing to talk to Erich Honecker but that they abjure contact with his reformist Communist successors. Some Social Democrats were ready to join the Greens, the only West German party favoring the permanence of two states on German soil. A rejuvenated Willy Brandt, at the height of his prestige in both Germanys, has called for the party to return to its traditions. It originally opposed German rearmament and membership in NATO because such actions would make irreparable the division of Germany. Now both NATO and the Warsaw Pact strike most Germans as increasingly anachronistic. Brandt has declared that, on the road to association and confederation, the two Germanys must contribute to a demilitarized, democratic and socially equitable future for Europe's once divided halves. He has also warned both the Soviet Union and the West that the most certain way to evoke German nationalism is to block the legitimate aspirations of the Germans for self-determination. The election, then, will pit Kohl not only against Lafontaine but against Brandt. The Social Democrats in the Democratic Republic, moreover, have just declared strongly for reunification—making it impossible for the West German right to monopolize national themes. Again, exact predictions are impossible, but the Social Democrats cannot be counted out, the more so as their skepticism about NATO is now shared by Kohl's party. Indeed, if there is a consensus in the Federal Republic, it is that NATO and the Warsaw Pact should be converted into arms-control agencies as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, countless smaller steps toward some form of unification are being taken. Imprecations about "stability" from President Bush and French President François Mitterrand do not fall on deaf German ears, but they are taken with large doses of political salt. The Germans sense that their erstwhile friends care little about German interests—belated confirmation of what the peace movement was saying all along. For the moment, there is a curious international alignment. The Communists in the Democratic Republic insist on the maintenance of two German states, although Modrow has said that unification is a possibility if the people wish it. As mentioned, the Greens in the Federal Republic oppose unification. They are in singular agreement with Bush, Mitterrand, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and (with rather more openness about the future) Gorbachev. The debate within the two Germanys, however, is less about unification than about the kind of society and state that will come at the end of the process. In that debate, ideas of a democratic and social democratic, if not socialist, Germany have appreciably more chances of eventually triumphing than does an aggressive and chauvinistic nationalism. □

NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS

The U.S. Plays The *Contra* Card

DAVID MACMICHAEL

In last spring's bipartisan compromise the Bush Administration and Congress apparently agreed to dismiss the Nicaraguan *contras* with severance pay and concentrate on political intervention to overthrow the Sandinistas. However, by midsummer it had become clear to Washington policy-makers that the Sandinistas had far more popular support than they had imagined. Hastily, the Administration, with the connivance of Democratic Congressional leaders, cranked up the *contras* again, sending them back into Nicaragua with the dual mission of terrorizing the Sandinistas and spreading propaganda for its hand-picked candidate, Violeta Chamorro. Chamorro and her National Opposition Union (UNO) make up the patchwork coalition cobbled together by U.S. advisers and fueled by millions of U.S. dollars administered by the National Endowment for Democracy (N.E.D.). It is now apparent that playing the *contra* card was a major error.

With voting in Nicaragua scheduled for February 25, nine separate parties (counting the UNO coalition as one) are vying for the presidency, 103 National Assembly seats, control of municipal councils and special posts in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region. Both within and outside the country, however, the contest is seen as one between the Sandinistas, led by incumbent President Daniel Ortega, and UNO, an unlikely aggregation incorporating, *inter alia*, two varieties of Communist parties and the far-right representatives of the Higher Council for Private Enterprise. Its vice-presidential candidate, Virgilio Godoy, is hated by business and labor, each for its own reasons. He is facing criminal charges for converting to his own use hundreds of thousands of dollars in party funds donated by the Friedrich Naumann

David MacMichael, a former C.I.A. officer, is Washington director of the Association of National Security Alumni. He reports on the Nicaraguan elections for the Institute for Media Analysis.

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President George Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

January 10, 1990

Dear Mr. President:

Your invasion of Panama is illegal.

This invasion, undertaken without consulting Congress, is a violation of the Constitution of the United States, Article 1, Section 8 which clearly states that Congress, not the President, has the power to declare war.

It also violates the U.N. Charter, the OAS Charter and the Canal Treaties.

In resorting to force rather than diplomacy against a Latin American neighbor, you have continued the disastrous pattern of your predecessors and the undermining of U.S. credibility abroad.

Small wonder that the people of Latin America distrust the U.S. For them this is not Operation Just Cause but Operation Just Business.

Granted General Noriega's regime, like all too many around the world, was repressive.

But that does not justify your violating the U.S. Constitution. Nor does it justify interfering with the sovereign nation of Panama.

By sending 24,000 American troops into Panama, you have caused immense damage to this already damaged country. You have killed at least 400 Panamanians, injured hundreds more, caused more than $100 million in destruction, and left thousands homeless.

And 26 Americans lie dead and hundreds are wounded.

We object to this lawlessness, the carnage and the damage.

We object to the mockery of our Constitution and the freedom it safeguards.

We object to the idea that we can impose democracy on another nation.

We call on you to withdraw the troops now, restore sovereignty to Panama and make reparations to the civilian victims immediately.

Sincerely,

James Abourezk
Mia Adjali
Exec. Secretary, UN/International Affairs, Women's Div., Board of Missions, United Methodist Church
Scott Armstrong
President, National Security Archive
Ed Asner
Richard Barnet
Marjorie Benton
Rubèn Blades
David Bradford
Attorney, Chicago
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Robert E. White
Former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador & Paraguay
Roger Wilkins
William W. Winpisinger
Mary Zepernick
President, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom

If you wish to add your name to this list write to:
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New York, NY 10012

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Foundation, which is affiliated with the Liberal International. Chamorro, the politically inexperienced widow of crusading *La Prensa* publisher Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, who was murdered in 1978 by henchmen of dictator Anastasio Somoza, was pushed into the candidacy by the United States and was reluctantly accepted by the political professionals, many of whom agreed to support her only after they were paid large sums. She is widely perceived as embracing former members of Somoza's National Guard like Enrique Bermúdez. These people were her revered husband's worst enemies—a major scandal that has turned many anti-Sandinistas against her.

Despite UNO's obvious divisions and the personal weaknesses of its leaders, when U.S. planners devised their political strategy early in 1989 the Sandinistas were faced with an apparently insoluble economic crisis—inflation for 1988 had been around 35,000 percent—and appeared ripe for electoral defeat. So it seemed reasonable to put together the broadest possible coalition to accomplish this task. The key ingredients were to be U.S. advice and U.S. money, both of which would come from the same place, the N.E.D. [see David Corn, "Foreign Aid for the Right," December 18, 1989].

Under the circumstances, the liberal Democrats who were persuaded to vote for a final $49.7 million for "humanitarian aid" in April 1989 believed this was a way to phase out the controversial *contras* without unduly embarrassing President Bush with the right wing of his party. They hoped to return to the political method of attacking the Sandinistas that had been started by Carter but abandoned by Reagan. They rationalized that a *contra* force should be maintained in case the Sandinistas did not provide a fair electoral process. Part of the deal, though, was that no significant military operations would be undertaken by the few troops still inside Nicaragua and that, as the authorization provided, the disbursement of funds would stop if the electoral process was found in November to be sufficiently fair.

After that compromise was approved by Congress, observers from the United Nations and the Organization of American States made favorable reports on the election process. But the *contras* strengthened their forces and intensified attacks inside Nicaragua. On August 7, 1989, the Central American presidents, in the Tela Accord, reiterated their earlier appeals for an end to U.S. funding, "humanitarian" or other, for the *contras*, and set a December 5 date for *contra* demobilization. Nevertheless, on October 29, Senator George Mitchell, the majority leader, declared Congress had made a commitment to support the *contras* until February that would be "honored."

However, the Sandinistas' ability to bring inflation under control without popular upheavals like those that rocked other Latin American states, and the massive displays in July of pro-Sandinista enthusiasm during the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the overthrow of Somoza, necessitated a change in plans. It appeared that the Sandinistas might win after all, and with U.N. and O.A.S. observer teams in place it would be impossible for the United States credibly to charge fraud, as it had done in 1984. Since one of the Sandinistas' major claims was that they had restored peace, the Administration decided to renew the *contra* military offensive to show that only an UNO victory would truly end the war.

Contra commanders and UNO political leaders had already met in Guatemala in June and pledged mutual support. But this compact looked more toward integrating the *contras* into a post-Sandinista government than to campaign activity. Nicaraguan intelligence reported some increase in *contra* infiltration after the meeting, and the remnants of Edén Pastora's old guerrilla forces switched their support from the Christian Socialists to the newly formed UNO. Not until August was there any significant movement of *contra* forces into Nicaragua. This was followed by an upsurge in their military and political activity in the countryside. *Contra* attacks on remote settlements and military outposts where security had slackened during the cease-fire were intended to challenge Sandinista claims of having restored peace. They were also designed to provoke harsh government responses—security measures or the renewal of conscription—that would be unpopular and could be presented as violations of the electoral laws or interparty agreements. The goal was partially achieved at the end of October when, after the *contras* murdered eighteen military reservists being trucked home to register to vote, the government announced the resumption of offensive operations.

Predictably, UNO and the United States denounced the Sandinistas for undermining the electoral process. Congress excoriated Ortega and honored the humanitarian aid commitment. It also voted $9 million in N.E.D. and other funds to support UNO. The C.I.A., after highly publicized negotiations between the Administration and Tony Beilenson, chair of the House Intelligence Committee, allegedly was barred from covert activities aimed at influencing the elections. However, the language of the Intelligence Author-

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Randy Hayes, executive director, Rainforest Action Network
1988 Working Assets funding recipient

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ization Bill, which Congress approved this past November, only prohibits the use of U.S. funds for political activities "inside Nicaragua" in support of any "party or candidate." There is no restraint on C.I.A. activities carried out elsewhere, nor on actions inside Nicaragua not in direct support of a "party or candidate." Thus the agency could direct *contra* operations intended to disrupt the political process.

What all this means is that the *contras*, with U.S. approval and at U.S. direction, became an active part of the U.S.-organized anti-Sandinista political campaign. Their two methods are armed attacks, which have largely been contained by government forces, and armed propaganda—political proselytizing at gunpoint—which continues, but with questionable effectiveness.

In early November, *contra* commander Bermúdez declared, "We want to express our complete and unconditional support for Doña Violeta Chamorro and Virgilio Godoy. . . . We are going to block the Sandinista accomplices and collaborators from registering, so we can avoid an electoral fraud. We will guarantee a victory for UNO." But the *contra* effort, which included rounding up campesinos from remote hamlets to register as potential UNO voters, forcing registration centers to close in other areas and assassinations of thirty-five Sandinista activists in Matagalpa, Jinotega and Chontales in November, has been politically ineffective and, in fact, counterproductive.

On the basis of my investigations in Nicaragua in December, I believe the decision to use the *contras* in the campaign was taken hastily, on the basis of ill-founded assumptions and without much preparation. For example, no preparations were made for resumption of *contra* supply flights, which, according to Nicaraguan intelligence, ended at the beginning of 1989. Defectors from *contra* groups recently infiltrated into Nicaragua all reported supply shortages, which have made it impossible to expand their numbers beyond the approximately 2,000 introduced since July. Moreover, they were given insufficient money to buy supplies from the local populace.

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This led to confiscations and worsening relations with the peasants they were trying to convince to support UNO. *Contra* defectors I interviewed described going to campesino houses, demanding food at gunpoint and then making a political pitch which they themselves found unconvincing.

The printed propaganda material they carried was almost all old stuff, dating from 1987 and earlier. Most of the ex-*contras* I spoke to had received only rudimentary propaganda training, given to them hastily just before their departure from Honduras or on arrival in Nicaragua. The sole exception was a June graduate of a *contra* "human rights" propaganda school in San José, Costa Rica.

The pro-UNO message has five themes: (1) UNO is going to win the election, so be on the winning side. (2) The Sandinistas can win only by fraud; any Sandinista government is fraudulent and must be opposed. (3) There will be no peace under a Sandinista government; the *contras* will fight until the Sandinistas are gone. (4) A Sandinista government means war and a continuation of the military draft. Only UNO can bring peace. (5) Only UNO can end the economic crisis. (The *contras* were told not to use the old theme that the Sandinistas are communists trying to destroy religion. Seminars given by the N.E.D. in Managua for UNO activists also teach that the religion theme is unconvincing. The "students" are advised to emphasize Sandinista fraud and the economic crisis.)

Intelligence reports and interviews with defectors show that the returning *contras* met with hostility. The campesinos had enjoyed relative peace and no longer saw the Sandinistas as their enemies. They regard the *contras* as losers (unlike in 1984 and 1985, when they appeared to be possible victors with whom it was wise to cooperate and dangerous to oppose), so why vote for the politicians the *contras* endorse? Security officials note a great increase in the number of campesinos reporting forced service for the *contras*. The peasants know the authorities will not punish them, and they want to keep the *contras* out of their neighborhoods.

My conclusion that the *contra* strategy has backfired is supported by a poll conducted for Hemisphere Initiatives by Greenberg-Lake Associates and released December 13, 1989. It showed the Sandinistas increasing and solidifying their lead and found that the most negative aspect of UNO in the minds of prospective voters was its association with the *contras*.

When U.S. planners decided after July to play the *contra* card in the Nicaraguan elections to offset unexpected Sandinista popularity, they clearly miscalculated. The *contras* have failed to disrupt the security situation significantly, although their political murders continue, and their propaganda efforts—crude, hastily prepared and poorly carried out—have been ineffective and even harmful. The U.S. invasion of Panama raised fears of further intervention in the region and, predictably, seems to have intensified negative feelings toward UNO among the electorate. Washington's UNO clients, who had enough difficulty explaining to the Nicaraguan electorate their subservience to the United States, now have to justify not only their refusal to condemn

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the almost universally despised *contras* but their active association with them. □

SECRET I.N.S. DEPORTATION PLAN

Kicking Out Palestinians

EVE PELL

Early one morning in January 1987, scores of Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.), Federal Bureau of Investigation and police agents raided several homes in Los Angeles, arresting six Palestinians and the Kenyan wife of one of them. All were initially charged with supporting the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.), a Marxist wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization that has been associated with terrorism. They were shackled and held in maximum security cells for two and a half weeks. Several days after the arrests, another Palestinian was picked up while taking a final exam at Chaffey Community College in San Bernardino County. Since then the Federal government has pushed relentlessly for the deportation of all eight.

"I was put into a cell with twenty-four-hour lighting and a camera that pointed at my head," Khader Hamide recalls. "I did not know day from night. . . . I did not know where my wife was. I could not make phone calls." Hamide, a Jordanian native with permanent resident status, has lived in the United States since 1971. He is a marketing consultant active in Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, and he speaks at rallies on behalf of Palestinian statehood. He was accused by the F.B.I. of being the Southern California leader of the P.F.L.P. The others, mostly students critical of U.S. policy in the Middle East, were branded P.F.L.P. supporters. All denied the accusations.

At the time, California Congressmen Don Edwards and Norman Mineta found the charges questionable and called for an investigation of the arrests. "Obviously such wholesale arrests by national identity are profoundly obnoxious and deeply disturbing," Mineta said. Government "sources" called the Palestinians terrorists but have presented no evidence to back up their claims. Civil liberties groups say they are being prosecuted for opposing U.S. foreign policy. The latter view is supported by National Security Decision Directive 207, which was issued in January 1986, a year before the arrests, but uncovered only last May. It suggests the arrests were part of a secret plan aimed at chilling dissent by foreigners living in the United States.

National Security Decision Directives (N.S.D.D.s) are among the most powerful and hidden tools of the Oval Of-

Eve Pell is a staff reporter at the Center for Investigative Reporting in San Francisco. Research for this article was underwritten in part by the Public Concern Foundation in New York City.

NATION REPRINTS

The Lords of the Global Village
Mergers and takeovers are transforming the information business, creating companies worth billions of dollars and concentrating power and ownership in the hands of a few. Ben H. Bagdikian, author of *The Media Monopoly*, examines the growth of the giant communication combines like Time Warner and Gulf + Western, and profiles such media barons as Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell. This timely special issue is essential to all students of the media, in or out of the classroom. *(June 12, 1989)*

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fice. They are not published in the Federal Register and are only rarely communicated to Congress. More than 200 of the approximately 300 N.S.D.D.s issued by Ronald Reagan still remain so highly classified that not even their subject matter is known [see Pell, "The Backbone of Hidden Government," June 19, 1989]. Among those that have surfaced are directives that guided the invasion of Grenada, initiated funding of the *contras* and called for the gagging of whistleblowers in the Federal bureaucracy. This past summer sections of N.S.D.D. 207 were declassified along with other government documents through a Freedom of Information Act request filed by the American Civil Liberties Union.

N.S.D.D. 207, titled "The National Program for Combatting Terrorism," assigned the Justice Department the task of keeping terrorists from entering the country and of expelling those already here. However, one of 207's mandates doesn't mention terrorists at all; it simply orders "expulsion from the United States of alien activists not in conformity with their immigration status." That means targeting politically active aliens—people who exercise free speech rights guaranteed to citizens—and checking to see if they are in technical violation of their visas and, if so, expeditiously deporting them. "Not in conformity with their immigration status" includes such ordinary technicalities as overstaying visa deadlines, not fulfilling student requirements or working illegally. To carry out these tasks, the Justice Department created a secret interagency group, chaired by an official from the I.N.S. and called the Alien Border Control Committee (A.B.C.C.).

The I.N.S. is required by law to take action against aliens who are out of status. However, 207's provision singling out "alien activists" strongly suggests politically motivated enforcement. Attorneys for the A.C.L.U., the National Lawyers Guild and the Center for Constitutional Rights charge that is just what happened in the case of the Los Angeles Eight. To support their claim, they point to the similarities between the government's legal tactics in prosecuting the eight and the provisions of an I.N.S. contingency plan considered by the A.B.C.C. in the course of implementing N.S.D.D. 207. The A.B.C.C. considered this plan in the fall of 1986; the arrests took place in January 1987.

The plan calls for legal hardball: targeting Arabs and Iranians, imprisoning the accused and opposing bail, introducing evidence secretly where possible and charging the accused with violating specific sections of the McCarran-Walter Act, which forbids entry into the United States of foreigners who, in the eyes of the government, advocate communism, anarchism or violence, or who are affiliated with organizations that do. (The act, which was used to deport aliens suspected of left-wing sympathies during the McCarthy era, has long been criticized for depriving foreigners in this country of First Amendment rights.)

Spokespeople for the I.N.S. deny that the government's prosecution of the Los Angeles Eight flows out of the I.N.S. contingency plan, which they label merely an option paper. At a press conference shortly after the arrests, John Shaw, assistant commissioner of the I.N.S., said that "the fact that there may be strange similarities [between the plan and the government's actions] . . . is unfortunate, but there is no factual correlation."

Over the months, the case has produced a tangle of litigation over wiretapping and selective prosecution. All in all, the government has not done well so far. It dropped subversion charges against the six nonresident aliens and went after them for visa violations as suggested in the I.N.S. contingency plan. "The idea is to find the fastest way to get rid of these people," I.N.S. Western regional counsel William Odencrantz told reporters at one point. "You want the touchdown, but you don't care if you get it running or passing."

At different times, the government tried three separate sections of the McCarran playbook against the two resident aliens. The Justice Department abandoned the first charge (advocating world communism) and the second (advocating "unlawful damage, injury or destruction of property") was declared unconstitutional, so it attempted a third (advocating "the unlawful assaulting or killing of government officials"). Los Angeles Federal District Court Judge Stephen Wilson scolded the government for going through the act "piece by piece" before he ruled in November 1989 that the last charge was unconstitutional as well. Wilson ruled that aliens essentially have the same broad free-speech rights as citizens, and in doing so broke new legal ground. The government has appealed, however, and also continues deportation efforts through the immigration courts.

David Cole, an attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City who is assisting with the Los Angeles Eight defense, is also defending another Palestinian whom he believes is being prosecuted as a result of N.S.D.D. 207. Fouad Rafeedie, a Cleveland grocery store manager and permanent resident with an American wife and child, left the United States in the summer of 1986 for a two-week visit to the Middle East. The government charges that he attended a P.L.O.-connected youth conference in Syria and that he also belongs to the P.F.L.P. He denies both accusations. The government is attempting to deport Rafeedie, using a legal tactic called summary exclusion that is also mentioned in the I.N.S. contingency plan.

One might think that implementing a secret presidential directive on terrorism would stand out in the memory of officials carrying out such tasks. Memories are crystal clear about implementing some provisions of N.S.D.D. 207, like new procedures for detecting fraudulent passports and hidden explosives, but strange lapses develop when these officials are asked about the issue of alien activists. The response of Paul Virtue, who in 1986 was on the staff of the I.N.S. general counsel and who chaired one group within the A.B.C.C., is typical. When asked how the committee addressed its mission to expel alien activists, he answered: "I have no recollection of that."

Smoking guns in the world of N.S.D.D.s seldom appear. But the shape and timing of the government's case against the Los Angeles Eight strongly suggest that in the Reagan and Bush Administrations politically objectionable aliens risk government scrutiny and possible expulsion if they exercise First Amendment rights guaranteed to all citizens. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Just Looking

MARTHA GEVER

VISUAL AND OTHER PLEASURES. *By Laura Mulvey. Indiana University Press. 201 pp. $35. Paper $12.50.*

FEMINISM AND FILM THEORY. *Edited by Constance Penley. Routledge, Chapman and Hall. 271 pp. Paper $13.95.*

THE FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis. *By Constance Penley. University of Minnesota Press. 207 pp. $29.50. Paper $13.95.*

In an era when mass media and political life are inseparable, the attention feminists give to film may seem merely modern. But the proliferation of filmmaking that challenges traditional representations of women, and the parallel growth of feminist film scholarship—as well as the passionate debates that have occasionally erupted in both arenas—indicate more than a contemporary sensibility or a demand for inclusion in popular culture. Feminists' questioning of how cultural institutions exclude women as producers and confine on-screen women within highly delimited standards of femininity bears directly on deeply embedded and dearly held beliefs about women, beliefs that inform the myriad social structures that subordinate women to men. What feminists also recognize is that cinema (which now overlaps with television) is a particularly powerful cultural arbiter that must be reckoned with and reinvented in ways that contest that power.

In response to the seemingly endless parade of mythic mothers and whores manufactured by Hollywood, the most obvious demand issued by feminists is that roles and plots reflect a more egalitarian sexual order: intelligent, active women portrayed as central characters in scenarios that don't feature masculine prowess. Since the early 1970s, however, many women involved in feminist criticism have argued convincingly that simple reversals and substitutions don't disturb the invisible ideological effects that cement masculine authority. Efforts to construct "positive images" within the framework of conventional cinema presume a direct correlation between images and reality, a correlation that is refuted by an increasing awareness of the problematic relationships between systems of representation and fantasy. Instead, such feminists have waged a two-pronged attack on the repressive and oppressive mechanisms at work within realist films (both documentary and fiction), undertaking detailed, sometimes exhilarating theoretical analyses of popular film culture as well as radically reworking cinematic conventions in iconoclastic, rigorous avant-garde films.

British theorists and filmmakers contributed much to this short (admittedly condensed and extremely general) history of feminist cinema, especially in the early years. The first section of Laura Mulvey's collected essays, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, allows a retrospective look at the debates that occurred in the intellectually dynamic and optimistic climate of pre-Thatcher Britain among feminists engaged in analyzing the political dimensions of cinema. Certainly Mulvey's article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," written in 1973 and first published in 1975 in the influential and often contentious journal *Screen*, stands as a bench mark for feminist film scholars and is easily the most widely reprinted and cited entry in the literature that composes what has become known as feminist film theory.

Although not conforming to a strict chronological order, the writings compiled in *Visual and Other Pleasures* trace a progression, starting with a short report on a demonstration at the 1970 Miss World pageant and concluding with a 1987 essay on the Oedipus myth. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" appears as Mulvey's initial foray into an analysis of the unconscious processes that inform film viewing. Her interest here is in the narrative dramas produced in Hollywood at the height of the studio era—from the 1930s through the 1950s—and in the function of a circumscribed range of female images within the economy of male libidinal pleasure achieved in the isolated, dark, dreamy world of movie houses. The daring proposition advanced by Mulvey in this compact text departs from the work by contemporary male film theorists (Christian Metz and Stephen Heath, for example), who applied psychoanalytic concepts dealing with the fundamentally visual character of psychic fantasy but who failed to distinguish between the different positions occupied by men and women as cinematic actors and images as well as spectators. Appropriating psychoanalytic theory "as a political weapon," Mulvey traces the operations of scopophilia (the pleasure of looking) in realist narrative films to castration anxiety, a fear based upon the visual recognition that the mother does not have a penis.

In Mulvey's intricate argument, two kinds of scopophilia are activated in the cinema. One entails a narcissistic investment in the projected human image, which is somewhat at odds with the second, a fetishistic desire to possess and control an object by means of voyeurism. She notes that both types of pleasure are decidedly masculine, related to fears of castration and attendant representations of the woman as a castrated man. Not surprisingly, this finding is confirmed in Mulvey's conclusion that in film, "the two looks . . . are obsessively subordinated to the neurotic needs of the male ego." This investigation of the popular appeal of filmed fantasies, written at a time when feminist intellectuals were adopting psychoanalytic methods and theories to expose some of the more intractable aspects of patriarchal power, provoked a number of responses, including Mulvey's own "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)." Contrary to this essay's reputation, the "afterthoughts" Mulvey pursued do not constitute a repudiation but rather a recognition of "other pleasures" afforded by certain narrative films in the Hollywood inventory. She asks whether women watching movies in which the fate of a female character constitutes the central narrative can achieve active, hence "masculine," pleasure in an identification with a heroine who resists her own feminization. Using *Duel in the Sun* as an exemplary text, she detects an "internal oscillation of desire," where the female protagonist and the women in the audience are "torn between the deep blue sea

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Martha Gever is editor of The Independent Film and Video Monthly *and co-editor of* Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures, *an anthology forthcoming from the New Museum and M.I.T. Press.*

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of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity."

In several subsequent articles Mulvey returns to questions posed in "Visual Pleasure," at times engaging in an implied dialogue with film theorists who have expanded upon her famous essay. Her penultimate chapter, "Changes: Thoughts on Myth, Narrative and Historical Experience," written in 1983, reads as a further revision of ideas formed ten years earlier, examined through the prism of a greatly changed economic and political environment. She prefaces her examination of narrative structures that uphold rigid binary oppositions—either/or constructs she too employed in previous work—with a political observation: "As the two terms (masculine/feminine, voyeuristic/exhibitionist, active/passive) remain dependent on each other for meaning, their only possible movement is into inversion. They cannot be shifted easily into a new phase or new significance." To dislodge the ideological force of the apparently timeless truths conveyed by categorical dichotomies, Mulvey proposes an analytic inquiry that moves "from opposition and its mythologies to resistance in history."

That has proved to be easier said than done, particularly in the increasingly institutionalized realm of academic film studies. But Mulvey writes as a filmmaker as well as a theorist. Her concern with breaking the stranglehold of conventional systems of representation is persistently linked to problems posed by feminist filmmaking and the possibility for a cinema of resistance. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," for instance, was as much an attempt to chart directions for feminist filmmaking as it was a virtuoso critique of Hollywood artifacts. Her advocacy of a negative aesthetics designed to destroy cinematic "illusions cut to the measure of [masculine] desire"—the strategy employed in her experimental films *Penthesilea* (1974) and *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977), both made in collaboration with Peter Wollen—provoked considerable controversy among filmmakers when it was first articulated, and it has since been challenged in narrative films that bespeak female desires, including Mulvey and Wollen's melodramatic detective story, *The Bad Sister* (1982).

Mulvey's dual position in relation to feminism and film, theory and practice, informs the contents of *Visual and Other Pleasures* with a political intelligence attuned to historical developments. In the introduction, she writes about her own role and that of other feminist critics: "I sometimes feel that the excitement, novelty and sheer difficulty of semiotic and psychoanalytic theory overwhelmed other political concerns and commitments."

However, no similar doubts trouble the emphasis on psychoanalytic theory in *Feminism and Film Theory*, an anthology compiled by Constance Penley, an associate professor of English and film studies at the University of Rochester. This book also presents a historical survey of feminist engagements with the representation of women in cinema and overlaps with Mulvey's insofar as it includes "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" as well as her "Afterthoughts."

Penley's project, which she outlines in her introductory discussion, is to publish in one book important feminist essays that address the "major issues of film theory as they were formulated in the theoretical ferment of the 1970s." Several articles by British writers Pam Cook and Claire Johnston, in addition to Mulvey's pair, establish points of departure for the series of sometimes ponderous, sometimes provocative, and generally closely argued texts that Penley selected. In the early 1970s the turn taken by British fem-

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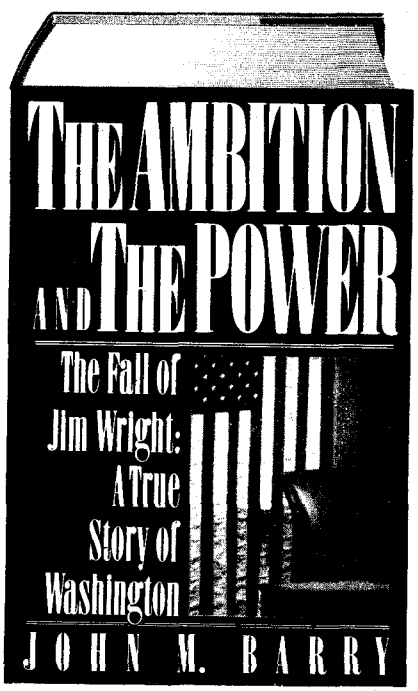

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inist critics (not yet labeled "theorists") toward psychoanalytic theory was surely a significant and useful departure from then-prevalent Marxist economic and sociological paradigms employed by feminists engaged in all areas of cultural analysis. The retrospective survey of this development in *Feminism and Film Theory*, as well as in many of the contributions to *Camera Obscura* (the feminist film journal that Penley helped found in 1976 and continues to co-edit, where a third of these essays first appeared), attests to the insights provided by this contribution. Altogether, the book provides an instructive application of what Edward Said dubbed "traveling theory."

Said's concept, which recognizes the movement and circulation of ideas "from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another," seems particularly apt in describing the terrain covered in *Feminism and Film Theory*. On one level, the book offers a scheme of interlocking influences and marked disagreements between various authors. In this vein, Janet Bergstrom (also a co-editor of *Camera Obscura*) performs a "rereading" of Claire Johnston's critical work, beginning with her 1973 "Notes on Women's Cinema" (not reprinted in the anthology). Bergstrom first identifies a set of crucial points raised in Johnston's writings: the need for feminists to examine the vehicles of popular entertainment, specifically Hollywood films, in order to understand how women figure in this system of representation; the potential disruption of the mechanisms of patriarchal ideology evident in certain "progressive" classic narrative films, like *Dance, Girl, Dance* and *Christopher Strong*, both directed by Dorothy Arzner; and the usefulness of semiotics and psychoanalysis in formulating strategies that might elucidate a woman's desire. However, Bergstrom goes on to dispute Johnston's notion of rupture and her interpretation of the subversive meanings in Arzner's films. The next essay, Jacquelyn Suter's "Feminine Discourse in *Christopher Strong*," takes issue with Johnston and Cook's thesis, finding instead that the actions of the central woman character in Arzner's film, a daring aviatrix, effect an affirmation of the patriarchal family rather than a subversion of it.

In the pages of *Feminism and Film Theory*, analytical propositions and proofs hover around certain areas of inquiry: pleasure and displeasure, the woman's image and its function within narrative structures, identification and the ideological dimensions of subjectivity, the dangers of concepts based on biological definitions of sexual difference. And the theory travels, stopping at some refreshing way stations. Elizabeth Cowie contributes a subtle examination of *Coma*, a film that has been applauded for its dauntless heroine, who solves a mystery of insidious medical malpractice. In an elegant textual analysis, based on a sophisticated use of theories of narrative structure, Cowie demonstrates how the film shifts from detective story to the horror genre. She locates this move by analyzing the changed position of the protagonist in relation to the camera—from the agent who anticipates events to the victim of schemes perpetrated by others—shifting the position of the spectator in relation to the projected images.

"*Caught* and *Rebecca*: The Inscription of Femininity as Absence" and "Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body," two essays by Mary Ann Doane, allow yet another rethinking of approaches suggested in Mulvey's work. Doane chose the two films discussed in the first piece as instances of Hollywood productions from the 1940s centered on women characters that belong to the category known as the "woman's picture." In Max Ophuls's and Alfred Hitchcock's *noir* films she is able to discern the contradictions presented by the meeting of female subjectivity and a presumed female spectator with the cinematic figures of masculine desire. But, she argues, this condition runs counter to and is eventually subsumed by Hollywood's regime of sexual differentiation, in which, the psychoanalytic school of feminist film theory insistently teaches, the woman *is* the image and can never *have* it. Doane's second article offers a welcome appraisal of the problems faced by feminist filmmakers who take seriously the collusion of cinematic modes of representation and reproduction of oppressive ideology in the unconscious minds of women as well as men. In order to find a dynamic space open to female imagination and capable of fashioning representations, Doane risks the charge of essentialism—that all differences between men and women are based in biology.

Doane's original engagement with the terms of psychoanalytic discourse in this article is impressive. Her hypothesis of a "new syntax . . . 'speaking' the female body differently," along with Cowie's assertion that "there is no single or dominant 'view' or look in cinema . . . but a continual construction of looks," indicate two of the more promising directions offered by this strain of feminist film theory. But they also indicate all too plainly where the theoretical project detailed in Penley's collection has traveled: to the academy, with Freud's *Complete Works* (Standard Edition) and Lacan's *Ecrits* as required reading for every course of study. The title *Feminism and Film Theory* might lead a reader to expect a broader undertaking, but a glance at the table of contents will alert those familiar with feminist film criticism to its limitations. What is missing from Penley's list of "important essays" are writings by feminist film scholars who haven't wholeheartedly adopted the psychoanalytic axioms, even those who may incorporate aspects of its method and vocabulary—Gertrud Koch and Teresa de Lauretis, for example.

More egregiously, not a single article in the book addresses subjects (in both senses of the word) that are not white and fundamentally heterosexual. Not only does Penley neglect the contributions of women of color, Third World feminists and lesbians in her introductory survey of the field; the other writings in the book likewise concentrate on problems of white, heterosexual female or feminine subjectivity, implying that racial hierarchies and sexual nonconformity are irrelevant or secondary to feminist film theory. Even if Hollywood films make the same assumption, many films made by women do not. Nor are all feminist attempts to challenge dominant social codes merely recommendations for "positive images," a tactic that many of the authors in the book rightly reject.

Penley's editorial stance assigns a privileged place to the psychic constitution of subjectivity and, in the process, downplays or dismisses altogether work that, in Mulvey's phrase, addresses "other political concerns and commitments." Essays like B. Ruby Rich's major study of *Mädchen in Uniform* (directed by Leontine Sagan), which proposes a lesbian reading of the 1931 German film in the context of the history of the German homosexual rights movement as well as the film's conditions of production and its formal structure, fall outside the theoretical boundaries outlined in this book. From another perspective, various texts by writer/filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha, including her new book, *Woman, Native, Other*, introduce serious questions concerning racist and colonialist cultural for-

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mations that intersect gender divisions, but they are also absent in *Feminism and Film Theory*. The point is not that particular essays or writers have been omitted but that the conjuncture of feminism and film theory has produced work that complicates—and sometimes disturbs—critical strategies that favor psychoanalytic and semiotic concepts.

In addition to her editorial advocacy on behalf of psychoanalytic film theory, Penley has been a frequent contributor to its literature. Her recently published collection of essays, *The Future of an Illusion*, serves as a companion volume to *Feminism and Film Theory* and demonstrates more forcefully her particular interests and agenda. Indeed, the second section of *The Future of an Illusion* bears the heading "Feminism and Film Theory." The latter of two essays that appear under that title reviews and then contests various theories proposed by male, mostly French, film critics who examine the cinematic apparatus—"the entire institution of cinema, its means of promoting and distributing itself and its administration of the social spaces in which films are viewed"—as well as the structures of narrative films. She summarizes the contributions by Metz, Jean-Louis Baudry, Raymond Bellour and company, consistently finding that they fail to acknowledge the function of sexual difference in the cinematic reproduction of ideology. However, it is in this essay that Penley spells out her affiliation with them: "In examining the model or metaphor of the cinematic apparatus, the most useful and successful feminist approaches have been those that take film theory on its own terms—semiology, psychoanalysis, textual analysis." This and related statements unambiguously establish the genealogy of the theoretical terms and methods in both of Penley's books and make apparent their problematic relationship to feminism.

Part of the difficulty lies in Penley's emphasis on the discipline of film theory, its fine points and crucial distinctions, in contrast with her often oversimplified references to feminist theory. As a result, this branch of feminist film theory inherits many of the cultural attributes and biases of its male predecessors—their white, hetero, Western blinders. And, when she writes in the preface to *The Future of an Illusion*, "Feminist work on sexual difference is seen as having reached an impasse because it, and the psychoanalytic theory to which it is indebted, lacks the kind of social or historical 'positivity' needed to align it with other differences in a comprehensive feminist theory of subjectivity," Penley sets up several straw women.

Reinforced by what she sees as an American preference for utopian designs and empirical methods, Penley contends that "positivity" and "a comprehensive feminist theory of subjectivity" encourage feminist political strategies riddled with theoretical flaws. These, she then proposes, are best exposed by understanding the workings of the unconscious, which are usually at odds with the principles of feminist politics. In the process, she neglects critical approaches that address cultural differences *between* women, discussions necessary to feminist attempts to analyze the ideological functions of representations of women *and* men of color, lesbians *and* gay men, and their relationship to white, straight, normative discourses of femininity.

Although Penley cautions that the claims of psychoanalytic feminism are "necessarily very modest ones" not precluding other avenues of inquiry, she nonetheless explains away feminist theories premised on gender, not sexual, difference—that is, culturally constructed identities of women and men, as opposed to male and female sexual identities shaped by psychic mechanisms—as yet another expression of wishful yearnings for positivity. She readily admits the possibility of formulating theories of other kinds of difference, such as race, class and ethnicity, outside psychoanalytic parameters, but a feminist theory of gender not premised on psychic mechanisms of repression seems utterly unacceptable to her. Nor are her claims for psychoanalytic feminism exactly modest, since both the book she wrote and the one she edited collectively constitute a polemic in favor of its primacy in feminist film theory.

Faced with misgivings about a theory of universal psychic structures that inevitably produce and reproduce only two possible and overdetermining sexual identities, Penley's defense rests on the theoretical necessity of this model—"a certain *theoretical* fixity and permanence we will have to live with if we are not to fall into a wishful 'utopianism of the psyche.' " Given the ascendancy of psychoanalytic theory in feminist cultural studies, such worries seem less urgent than they once did. And while Penley's "pessimism of the unconscious" may be well founded, such pronouncements tend to discourage attention to the relationship between feminist film theory and femi-

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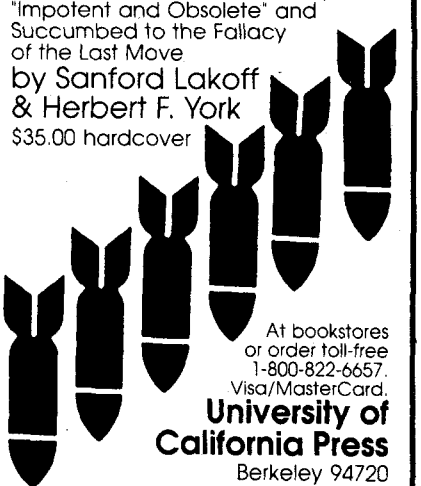

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nist filmmaking, which receives only cursory treatment in Penley's essays and in the various chapters of *Feminism and Film Theory*.

That this connection—so ardently upheld in the feminist writings of the early 1970s—has been largely abandoned by these film scholars is especially sad, since the work of women filmmakers who dispute the status quo continues to receive little public support, either critical or financial. Still, women have produced a significant number of films (and, recently, videotapes) during the past few decades. These works do not always further an explication of the formations of sexual difference and/or a specifically female desire, but they provide ample material for theories of cinematic resistance to ideologies that oppress women. The individual psyche may stubbornly resist change, as Penley argues, but the sexual politics of representation carried on by feminists cannot be conceived only as a matter of psychological reorganization. A feminist cultural critique also concerns the exercise of power that saturates all aspects of cinema, from its production and the images circulated to the discussions it provokes. Power relations invariably inflect filmmaking as well as the course of theoretical travels—relations best understood and undermined by institutional critiques and social movements. The representative sample of psychoanalytic feminism in Penley's two books disregards these factors, but without them feminist films cannot be made. □

Somebody in Books

EARL SHORRIS

NELSON ALGREN: A Life on the Wild Side. *By Bettina Drew. Putnam's. 416 pp. $27.95.*

"The writing of history," Goethe said, "is a way of getting rid of the past." Perhaps he was referring to biography, which seems to be a way of collecting the remains of a life and depositing them in a box of pages, a contribution to the boneyard called posterity.

My discomfort with final things arises from having read Bettina Drew's biography of Nelson Algren, whom I knew, admired and angered before he died and was booked. It is a good biography, full of facts and anecdotes, sympathetic, sometimes loving, as sweet as a socialist's smile, but it never overcomes the cool, deodorizing distance of history; in short, it is all right as such books go, but it doesn't stink.

The problem may be blamed on Plutarch, who set the standard for biographies. He was, according to his translators, a lousy writer, the kind who has trouble putting together a clear sentence, let alone re-creating the breath and body odors of Pericles or Pompey. Perhaps as a result of his inabilities, Plutarch decided that biographies of artists weren't worth the trouble it took to write or read them. "It is quite possible," he said, "for us to take pleasure in the work and at the same time look down on the workman." Plutarch was after "virtue in action," a kind of gold standard for behavior. He wanted the big time, wars, affairs of state, not hangover sweats or the unmistakable stench of rotten teeth, which is the sort of stuff artists and their works are made of.

By Plutarch's rules, Nelson Algren was not a fit subject for a biography, so Algren's disappearance into a collection of facts is not of consequence. But Plutarch's rules may not be correct. The making of art may be "virtue in action," especially in the case of Algren, who was both socially aware and a writer of beautiful prose, and his reduction to an ash of facts may be a loss of precious laughter and nasal song. The case for Algren merits consideration.

The author of *The Man With the Golden Arm* and *A Walk on the Wild Side* was born in 1909 in Chicago, to Goldie and Gerson Abraham, and named Nelson Algren after his Swedish grandfather. If an unhappy childhood is a writer's capital, Algren was twice blessed: His mother beat him and his father failed him. Then the Great Depression came along just in time to prove that life after adolescence wasn't going to get any easier. He wandered south and west after college, living in the world of his first novel, *Somebody in Boots*, but not truly a part of it.

Although he rode the rails and picked fruit and even spent some time in jail, Algren was an educated man, a published writer even then, with literary friends in the John Reed Club and a book contract from Vanguard Press. When he was locked up in the county jail in Alpine, Texas, it was not for stealing bread or holding up a gas station. The object that had inspired his criminal activity was the typewriter he had been using at Sul Ross State University.

His life followed that pattern. He was a man of the left, a close friend of Jack Conroy and Richard Wright, but he did not go to Spain to fight against the fascists, a decision he said he regretted the rest of his life. He wrote the best American novel about drug addiction, but the only drugs he used were alcohol and marijuana. He watched. By middle age he looked like a battered bird, scrawny, with a coxcomb of hair and a voice that squawked, "ChiCAWgo," but his eyes, even when he seemed to be sleeping, slumped in a chair, were open slits, watching. He collected everything he saw and heard, all the events his senses could entice from the world, and rearranged them into fiction.

Nothing was safe from his imagination, not even his own persona. He thought of himself as a cardplayer, and while nobody ever wrote a better novel about poker than *The Man With the Golden Arm*, Algren was a fish at the table, a man who would bet on filling an inside straight against a full house. He was either an unreconstructed male chauvinist or a man whose empathy with women knew no limits. He frequented whorehouses, he loved to be with whores, his most treasured acquaintances were two women he imagined as "twin hookers," and yet he had an affair of both the head and the heart with the great feminist Simone de Beauvoir. Did he understand something about the oppression of women that could be said only obliquely then, or even now?

Never Come Morning, his second novel, was about the betrayal of a girl and the guilt of the boy who permitted her to be gang-raped to prove his loyalty to his pals. Algren's biographer thinks his attitudes toward women were shaped more by his love for his older sister than his unfortunate relationship with his mother. It was his older sister who introduced Algren to culture, who took him out of the neighborhood and into the world, perhaps creating for him the necessary distance between art and its object.

He had success as a writer, winning the first National Book Award for *The Man With the Golden Arm*, but he could never make the big money he coveted. He

After reading Earl Shorris's first novel, Ofay, *Nelson Algren said he liked one chapter, but not very much.*

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wasted vast energies in bitterness about his dealings with Otto Preminger. He despised the book publishing business in its entirety and he despised editors, publishers and agents individually. He told me once, in all sincerity, "You won't be a writer until you've fired your first agent."

Money problems, gambling losses, regrets and feuds dogged him in his days and in the uncomfortable dreams of his nights. He said after *A Walk on the Wild Side* that he wasn't writing another novel, "for the same reason I'm not buying a new Cadillac: I can't afford the payments." He wrote always for love and money, publishing in *The Nation* and in *Playboy*.

The paranoid right haunted him, his affair with de Beauvoir was complicated by his inability to get a passport, and he suffered a devastating string of bad notices in *The New York Times Book Review* and other establishment publications. I remember once sitting in a car with Algren and Herbert Gold in San Francisco while the driver of the car went into a liquor store. Gold, who was sitting in the front seat, chose that moment for an act of contrition: He apologized for having written a negative review of *The Man With the Golden Arm*. Gold admitted to having tried to make his reputation with the attack, a not unusual failing of young writers. At the end of that extraordinary moment, I looked over at Algren, expecting him to make an equally generous response. He appeared to have fallen asleep.

Mice gnawed at his life. Maxwell Geismar praised Algren's work in *The Nation*, but in *The New York Times Book Review* Arno Karlen called him a "tough-sentimental literary lush with whiskey-courage whose breath is stronger than his brains." Conrad Knickerbocker mocked him, describing his work as "quaint." Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fiedler and Norman Podhoretz all attacked him for writing about "bums." Orville Prescott thought his work was unrealistic. Roger Straus misplayed the paperback-rights deal on one book, and William Targ made a mess of publishing another. And the critical mice never let up: James Atlas left itty-bitty tracks all over Algren's career last fall when he reviewed Algren's life instead of his biography in *The New York Times Book Review*; it was a bad performance, the lifeless speaking ill of the dead.

Bettina Drew describes Algren rising and sinking: fame, the grand affair with de Beauvoir, a little money, and then the long years of relative obscurity, the battering of a man who thought he could be François Villon in modern dress. She does not, however, give us either an integrated theory of his life and work, which is the only possible purpose of a biography of a writer, or a re-creation of him as he was in life, which is the only possible purpose of a biography of a man. Her work is a solid compendium, but no more.

To bring Nelson Algren to life again in a book is a daunting task: He was a mysterious person, secretive in the deepest way, given to dissembling; an artist who, in middle age, fell or was pushed into mere criticism. He was often said to have been the last of the Chicago writers, but I do not think that is what he was at all. He began in the Chicago style and went on. He laughed. Of all the writers who struggled up out of the Depression, he was the best at laughter, bitter or childish laughter, the sly giggle of a clown. He knew that something was desperately wrong, that the game wasn't on the level, and yet he kept playing. Plutarch and Podhoretz were both wrong about him. The writing life of Nelson Algren was, in many ways, "virtue in action." A true man of the left, he always bet on long shots. □

Dr. Spock Brought Me Up

MICHAEL FERBER

SPOCK ON SPOCK: A Memoir of Growing Up With the Century. *By Benjamin Spock and Mary Morgan. Pantheon. 282 pp. $19.95.*

I cherish a memory of Benjamin Spock surrounded by reporters in 1968, not long after our indictment for conspiracy to violate the draft law, patiently answering the same questions he was always asked. One of them—it must have been his favorite—went like this: "Dr. Spock, how do you answer the charge that the permissiveness of your baby book has created the current generation of student radicals and draft dodgers?" Spock began slowly, thoughtfully, as if he had never been asked that one before. "Well, first of all, it's not true that my baby book is permissivist. I've never believed in a child-centered home, with the parents hovering over the crib, saying, 'Are you happy? Are you well adjusted?' Parents should take an interest in their own activities and bring their children into them bit by bit. What I've argued for is not permissiveness but flexibility. There's no need to put a baby on a strict four-hour feeding schedule or to start toilet training at exactly twelve months.

"Second, my book has had only a small influence on the present generation of young people compared to such things as television, popular music and the deep feeling that there is something wrong with a country . . . " (Spock took a breath, his voice rose in pitch and volume and picked up a low, gravelly rumble. My memory of this is entirely auditory, as I could hardly see his face, and though I am reconstructing some of it, many phrases echo vividly in my mind.) " . . . with a country that seems to have lost its higher purposes and now allows its government to force its young men to kill innocent villagers in a country 10,000 miles away. I've had very little to do with those influences. But if you still want to blame me for this generation of young radicals and draft resisters, I'd be PROOOOOUUD to take the credit!"

Never has the word "proud" been so proudly spoken, an octave higher, many decibels louder, as long as the five words before it and with such melodious raspiness. It made me proud to hear it, sitting across the room, a draft resister wearing a "Dr. Spock brought me up" button (which was almost true, as my parents had bought his famous book when I was 2).

Spock's appearance and voice had a lot to do with his impact in the 1960s, from his famous advertisement for SANE, "Dr. Spock is worried" (about nuclear testing), to his indictment and trial in Boston. Always the dark blue pinstriped three-piece suit and the gold watch chain, and always the wonderful music of his voice: solemn, gentle, a touch of New England jeremiad, a touch of Yankee aristocrat, wise and fatherly, angry, for a moment hurt (as by Lyndon Johnson's personal betrayal) and for a moment gleefully mischievous (when happy to be among a growing movement of obstreperous youth).

Spock on Spock has quite a few pictures, several of them good representa-

Michael Ferber, a co-conspirator with Dr. Spock in 1968, now teaches English at the University of New Hampshire and often writes about William Blake.

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tions of Spock as "Spock." But it cannot capture much of his voice. He writes well, as millions of grateful parents know, but the tone and style that he puts across in his baby books are found only intermittently here. He did not write this one. His wife, Mary Morgan, put a microphone in front of him until he filled fifty tapes with reminiscences, and then the couple edited them until they seemed to make a "single story," as Mary writes in her preface. It is debatable whether they do, but the individual stories gathered here, some of them very good, are much better if you know Spock well enough to imagine his voice telling them. If you don't you may wonder how it could be, as Morgan puts it in her opening sentence, that "what made me fall in love with Ben Spock, the first time I saw him, was his way of telling a story." Many of these stories fall flat, and you may wonder why they are there—perhaps a compact disc should have been included with the book.

Spock's future biographers, when using this book, will have to sort him out from Morgan and probe beneath the reticences. There is less about Jane Cheney, his wife of over forty years, than about Mary Morgan, whom he married in 1976, or even Morgan's daughter, with whom he had a difficult time as a stepfather. It is odd and awkward that on page 243, nine-tenths of the way through the book, long after discussing their courtship, children and Greenwich Village apartment, Spock (or Morgan) refers to Jane as "my wife Jane," as if we've never heard of her. There is not a word about why they parted. Certain subjects may be none of our business, but in a book that is sometimes fulsome in detail, even confessional, Cheney's absence piques readers' curiosity more than her presence would have, and leaves them unsatisfied. The book is less an autobiography than material for one, useful but very selective. We can hope that the tapes will be preserved and that Morgan will be generous with them to the inevitable biographers.

For Spock is a national treasure, and it is of real interest to know how he came to do what he has done and think what he thinks. There is a good deal here about his philosophy of child raising and how he has revised some of it—toilet training, for example—which anyone interested in the changing mind of America will want to ponder. Most fascinating is his account of his formidable mother, whose certainties and puritanical stringencies about child raising (Ben was the eldest of six) seem the complete opposite of his ideas. Until he graduated from Yale his life was governed by her religion of early to bed, fresh air (even an outdoor school during New Haven winters), taboos on eating bananas, a fixation on "wholesome" deeds and thoughts (Ben did not kiss a girl until he was 17) and minute moral account-giving. When four days pass without a letter from him at Andover, Spock's mother launches a telegram: "Write or come home." When he imprudently writes her that a girl he has just met has told him he is attractive, Mother fires back, "Benny, it seems clear that you lost your ideals at Andover, and that when you come back to New Haven to go to Yale next fall, you should live at home to try to recover them." And live at home he did, for a year.

With such hair-raising parents (his father was no slouch, either) one wonders whether Spock turned to pediatrics and child psychology to give himself the space to re-experience and reassess his own childhood. Did such an upbringing give him the starch that made him a political rebel, or did it delay his rebellion until he sorted out his own soul from his mother's? It must have been every bit as gratifying and astounding as he says it was to hear his mother's opinion of his book: "Benny, I think it's quite sensible." Mothers like his are rare today, partly because of his book, but if we are grateful for the son then we should be grateful for the mother. Herbert Marcuse might have had Spock in mind when he wondered whether the liberation or desublimation of the new generation's psyches was altogether a good thing: A strong Oedipus complex might be necessary to produce strong rebels.

Something of that mixture—strict New England wholesomeness and sensible encouragement—seems to have struck millions of mothers and fathers as just what they were looking for. And that same mixture gave the emergent political rebel a tone and stance that the peace and justice movements needed and welcomed. (There was a brief public flap over the sexism of his book, but Spock has made amends.) The draft-resistance movement and the mainly youthful antiwar movement were very thankful that such a man should stand with us. By 1967 a large number of professors, writers, clergy and longtime activists like David Dellinger and Paul Goodman had joined the civil rights movement and then the antiwar movement, but when Dr. Spock got himself indicted for conspiracy to aid, abet and counsel young men to resist the

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draft, it seemed that a portion of conservative, wholesome America had broken with its past and thrown in its lot with us, and we rejoiced. □

The Black Venus

LYNN GARAFOLA

JAZZ CLEOPATRA: Josephine Baker in Her Time. *By Phyllis Rose. Doubleday. 321 pp. $22.50.*

Any new book by Phyllis Rose raises high expectations. The author of a fine biography of Virginia Woolf and a page-turning study of five Victorian marriages, she is a scholar who has made her mark by looking at the English literary past through a feminist lens. Sophisticated, witty, appreciative of the relationship between imaginative and lived experience, she has the tools of an ideal biographer.

Alas, her *Jazz Cleopatra: Josephine Baker in Her Time* is a failure on nearly every count: as biography, as cultural history and, most egregiously, as the story of a dancer. Revealing only a superficial grasp of Baker's many worlds and the sources documenting them, this newest entry in the long and growing list of Baker books is an embarrassment to a scholar of Rose's reputation.

Why did Rose choose to write about a woman who expressed herself through her body rather than her pen? In the preface she explains that she "wanted something from Josephine Baker: a certain spontaneity, fearlessness, energy, joy." That something, as compelling to Rose as to European audiences of the 1920s, was Baker's "otherness," the eroticism, physicality and blackness imprinted by her dancing body on the era's white imagination. The politics of that body, first revealed to Paris in the 1925 *La Revue Nègre*, is what really interests Rose: the sexual, racial and artistic ideologies that converged in the Charlestons and banana dances that made Baker an overnight sensation in the French capital. In fact, about a third of the book is given over to delineating the primitivist ideas that led contemporaries to view Baker as "one of many African 'objects' which suddenly seemed beautiful to a Parisian avant-garde."

Rose casts a wide net in these early chapters. Long before Baker hit Paris, she writes, "the dancing black female body was associated in the French imagination with lewd invitation." She quotes the observation of an 1828 traveler in Senegal that "the dance of the Negresses is incredibly indecent." She cites Flaubert, who regarded the idea that black women were more erotic than white women as such a cliché that he listed it in his *Dictionary of Received Ideas* under "Negress." She mentions the women in the harem scenes of Gérôme and the Tahitian paintings of Gauguin—images "both mysterious and sexually available, alien yet subject." She notes the primitivism of modernist writers like D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster. And she reminds us of the influence exerted by African tribal objects on Picasso, Matisse and other painters just before the adventure of Cubism.

The problem with this grab bag of sources is that they are largely irrelevant to Baker, even if they pad the narrative with the appearance of scholarship. Exoticism, primitivism, racism and sexism are not irrelevant to the story, but they have to be located in history; they meant something different in Deco Paris than at other times and in other places, something specific to Baker's world.

Rose has a hard time defining that something because her knowledge of the period is so sketchy. She gives jazz hardly a mention. Yet if anything prepared the way for Baker, it was this American musical import. It arrived (as she notes) with black American soldiers at the end of World War I; taken up by the avant-garde, it quickly became a form of primitivist chic. In postwar Europe jazz was more spectacle than music, more about making as much noise as possible than making music swing. "I listened to a jazz band at the Casino de Paris," wrote Jean Cocteau in 1919. "The Negroes in the air, in a sort of cage, lash about, waddle, tossing to the crowd morsels of raw meat, to blows of trumpet and rattle. . . . The hot hall, full of painted girls and American soldiers, is a saloon in movies of the Far West." Primitivism, physicality and emotionalism: These were the ingredients that appealed to Paris tastemakers. Few thought of jazz as art, but many felt, with Cocteau, that the "savagery" and bold flouting of tradition associated with jazz could stimulate the imagination, could be "as fertilizing to an artist as life itself." This gentrified populism carried over into attitudes toward Baker.

The reason so many black musicians found themselves in Paris, and the reason Baker chose to stay, was American racism. For the first time, they could live their lives without the daily humiliation of the color barrier. Racism, however, was hardly unique to America. As Bryan Hammond and Patrick O'Connor point out in *Josephine Baker* (a far superior book, published in 1988 but overlooked in the hoopla over *Jazz Cleopatra*), during Baker's early years abroad she lightened her skin with powder and plastered her hair flat with Bakerfix. She couldn't "pass," and never tried to, but from the films she made (where she never got to marry the man she loved) to the songs she sang (in one, "Si j'étais blanche!" she wore a blond wig), the fact of her blackness was seldom forgotten.

In France, as Rose notes (although she doesn't fully appreciate the ramifications), Baker was not universally admired. Her triumphs coincided with an emerging debate over the fate of Western civilization, which many believed was endangered by the barbarism of the East and the collapse of moral values from within. Jazz was one sign of this "collapse"; others were Americanization, cosmopolitanism (that old French bugaboo) and mass culture—all embodied by Baker. Just as Marianne and Joan of Arc represented a vision of France dear to the right, so Baker, the "black Venus," summed up the heterodoxical tradition associated with the left.

Curiously, for all the talk about race, Rose seems indifferent to its role in Baker's own life. She remarks, with a certain archness, on Baker's habit of starting the story of her life with the bloody East St. Louis race riot, "as though it were her earliest memory." Of course it wasn't her earliest memory (she was 11 when the riot took place), but it was a primal one; it taught her what it meant to be black. Forty-seven years later, the horror was still with her. Rose omits Baker's famous recollection: "They ran across the bridge from East St. Louis to escape the rednecks, the whites killing and beating them. I will never forget my people screaming, pushing to get to the bridge, a friend of my father's face shot off, a pregnant woman cut open. I see them running to get to the bridge. I have been running ever since."

Lynn Garafola is a dance critic and the author of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes *(Oxford).*

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Rose treats Baker's childhood poverty just as superficially. "She liked good shoes," reads the caption for a picture showing Baker posing in alligator T-straps. Well, who wouldn't, if they'd grown up, as she did, in shoes made by a stepfather from newspapers? Rose passes cavalierly over other aspects of Baker's early life. Her first two marriages receive a scant paragraph each. True, unlike Rose's letter-writing Victorians, the husbands weren't educated, and they certainly weren't glamorous. But surely she could have found out more about Willie Wells (husband number one) than his name and more about Willie Baker (husband number two) than his occupation (Pullman porter) and skin tone (light).

Rose's interest in Baker picks up with World War II, when she went to work for the French resistance and nearly died of an infection that may have followed the birth of a stillborn child. Both events engage the author's sympathies, and she finds in Baker's often harrowing experiences in North Africa the seeds of the crusade that dominated her later years. Before the war, Baker had shied from racial activism; in the 1950s, by contrast, she used her American tours to further the cause of civil rights, refusing to perform before segregated audiences, insisting that she and her troupe be housed at leading hotels, speaking out publicly on behalf of Willie McGee, who was sentenced to death for raping a white woman. Her confrontation in 1951 with gossip columnist Walter Winchell, in whose presence she had been denied service at the Stork Club, made headlines. Even if Rose seems a little disdainful of Baker's "rescue fantasies" and celebrity style, the book makes clear her genuine contribution to the cause of civil rights.

Perhaps the book's most signal failing is the treatment of Baker's art. Rose doesn't think highly of it, she doesn't understand it (her dance bibliography consists of exactly three titles) and she feels no obligation to do it justice. Baker may well have uncovered, as Rose claims, "a new region for desire." But the repeated allusions to Baker's "rump," "fanny" and "heinie" cheapen both the desire and the dancer. Nearly always, Rose seems to be looking down on her subject. Her description of Baker's celebrated "banana dance," unveiled at the Folies-Bergère in 1926, is stylishly dismissive. "She was wearing nothing but a little skirt of plush bananas. It was the outfit she would be identified with for the rest of her life, a witty thing in itself and wittier still when Baker started dancing and set the bananas in jiggling motion, like perky, good-natured phalluses."

Rose, of course, never saw Baker dance. But this hardly excuses the references to fannies and phalluses and all the other demeaning nonsense that passes for analysis of Baker the performer. To begin with, there are her films, a real treasure-trove given the paucity of dance footage from the 1920s. Rose has looked at them, but what she finds and chooses to cite—"a dancer who is energetic and contagiously happy" and another dancer's description of Baker's "heinie moving so fast behind her like a hummingbird"—says more about the author than the artist. Then there are hundreds of remarkable photographs. These Rose largely ignores, although what they reveal about Baker—her ability to turn on for the camera and change personalities with the photographer—are clues to the qualities she brought to the stage.

In the end, *Jazz Cleopatra* is a clear mismatch of author and subject. Rose wants words and she wants them in writing, and since she can't get them from Baker, she treats her life as having little consequence. Even if Josephine Baker came from nowhere and used her body rather than her pen to entertain, she was an artist of the first rank. From Rose's grudging tale, you'd never know it. □

MAINTENON POSTCARD

Oiseaux with names unknown to me in English too
sing French chansons beneath the chestnut trees.
Peonies with ants in them seem American
as I am, transplanted here to this jardin
just as accidentally. I wander
in a no-man's-land of language, under
Esperanto skies made more for painters—
who never translate. I want their
freedom, their universal gestures—
like the three brown horses in the chateau's pasture
we saw playing yesterday. . . . I'm at the
Aqueduct Café. To fill the fountains at Versailles
is why they built its local namesake.
But the workers died in droves, sick
with a word I didn't know. Thirsty fleurs-de-lis
decorate their bravery. History
has saved their half-built monument and sacked the kings;
there is *some* justice. And it's breathtaking—
the aqueduct, I mean. (A Roman moon
might mistake this ruin for its own
there's so much time in it; an Egyptian might
recall the sight of Hebrews building pyramids—
it has that height of grandeur and of doom.)
I know that I will dream of it back home.
And now I'd best sign off: I'm out of room.

Jennifer Rose

FILM NOTES.

STUART KLAWANS

The Plot Against Harry was filmed in 1968 and rescued from the dustbin of history twenty-one years later, when it premiered at last fall's Toronto and New York Film Festivals. Written and directed by Michael Roemer and photographed by Robert M. Young—the same team that made *Nothing But a Man*—*Harry* failed to win release in the 1960s for two main reasons: Its comedy was utterly deadpan and its moral vision utterly equivocal. Now that it has been dug out of the vault, film-fêted and put into distribution, it sits in the theater like some cinematic time machine, ready to transport you back to a New York City of go-go bars and bubble hairdos, long black Cadillacs and radical chic. The images, photographed in lustrous black and white, are still mint-fresh; and thanks to Roemer's directorial eye, they incorporate almost as much documentary detail as they do nar-

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rative incident. As a result, *Harry* is an astounding and often hilarious spectacle of the late 1960s. Its story concerns a racketeer trapped into respectability by his Jewish family; but its obsession is the way people presented themselves to one another in fashion shows and telethons, lavish weddings and tacky bar mitzvahs, fundraising parties and televised Congressional inquiries.

The subject under investigation is Harry Plotnick, boss of one small corner of the New York numbers racket. Newly released from prison, Harry finds that almost all members of his multi-ethnic gang have deserted him. The old neighborhood has changed; the new people don't want a Jew as their head bookie, and the mob doesn't think highly enough of Harry to help him. Still, he is determined to retake his territory so that he can return to his version of the good life: residing in a hotel suite, eating room-service meals, finding love with the better class of prostitute. Unfortunately, he has hardly gotten back on the street when he runs his limousine smack into a carload of his long-forgotten family. Before Harry knows it, he has gone into the kosher catering business, a straight job from which he finds it harder and harder to extricate himself.

The large cast, made up mostly of nonprofessionals, is headed by Martin Priest, a lookalike for Roy Cohn with a bad case of heartburn. Only the slightest flickers of impatience flash from his hooded eyes as he passes from one humiliation to the next: abasing himself before a radio talk-show host, submitting to initiation into a fraternal lodge, reporting dutifully to his former wife (who interviews him, significantly enough, in the midst of a canine obedience class). At the beginning of the film, Priest's drooping lids seem to belong to a jaded crook. By the end, they look more like the baleful peepers of a puppy that knows it's been bad. Priest's blending of sleaze with long-suffering aplomb is expertly droll; but I should mention as well the wonderful performances of Maxine Woods (in real life a psychoanalyst), Ben Lang (an auditor for the State of New York) and Henry Nemo (a songwriter who used to collaborate with Duke Ellington). I haven't seen such a delightfully assorted supporting cast since the Watergate hearings.

Our Man Flint: The first box-office reports on *Roger & Me* have come in, courtesy of *Variety*, and all right-thinking Americans should be gratified. In its first six days, during a limited run on only four screens nationwide, Michael Moore's documentary grossed just over $80,000. Judged against films released in similar circumstances, *Roger* did comparable business to *Glory* and *Enemies, A Love Story*. In Manhattan, it handily outdrew Steven Spielberg's *Always* (playing up the street) and *The War of the Roses* (which was just around the corner). Comparisons with New York's top moneymaker for the week, *Tango & Cash*, are even more cheering, since that picture brought in only nine times the gross while playing on ninety-six screens to *Roger*'s one.

Congratulations to Michael Moore, not least for proving that leftists, too, can have box-office acumen. Instead of casting Stallone, he played the lead himself. □

EXCHANGE.

(*Continued From Page 150*)

ordered an inquiry into possible conflicts of interest on the part of Schwarz and one other member of his board.

That is why Schwarz's citation of support from D.C. 37 on his contract proposals takes a lot of chutzpah. It is also quite misleading if we examine the union's proposals to the commission on contracting and civil service and compare them with what Schwarz got. A D.C. 37 staff member I spoke with acknowledged that "we got killed." A June 26, 1989, memo from the union's research department confirmed this. Nevertheless, just before the election D.C. 37's chief, Stanley Hill, and his aide Carol O'Cleireacain argued at a Municipal Labor Council meeting that despite evident weaknesses in the charter, it was the best that could be expected in the present political environment. Of course if Hill had thrown D.C. 37's influence behind real charter reform, if it hadn't simply backed *every* incumbent City Council member, the political environment might have changed.

Did critical *New York Times* editorials on the commission's land use provisions serve as the prod that changed the charter? I have two sources who say they did: one a commission staff member, the other a city official who worked closely with the commission. To figure out who's more likely to be telling the truth, look at what *The Times* wrote last summer and then at the changes instituted by Schwarz. First *The Times* said that the Mayor needed more than four votes on the City Planning Commission. Schwarz gave him five. Then *The Times* said that was not enough. Schwarz gave him six. Then *The Times* said that was still not enough, so Schwarz gave him seven and a majority. If this is just a coincidence let Schwarz release the relevant minutes of staff meetings. Until then I'll go with my sources.

Schwarz infers that I think all those who supported the charter were part of a giant conspiracy. How can I include liberals like Ruth Messinger in my demonology, he wants to know. What real estate does Messinger own? Fritz, did you read the article? I cited Messinger's reasons. She argued that no charter had ever been defeated. We have to take the deal we've got, she argued, because the next time the establishment will be even stronger. (It turned out that the charter squeaked by with less support than any in New York history—a margin of just 80,000 votes out of a million—and if Messinger hadn't supported it, it couldn't have passed. But that was her position.)

For an elite to gain the consent of the governed, all those who support its position don't have to have the same elite interests and share the same reasons. After all, if everyone had the same interests as the elite, it wouldn't be an elite. Besides those charter advocates like Messinger and D.C. 37's Hill, who argued that a new mayor might appoint an even worse bunch than those on the Schwarz commission, the most forceful, consistent and numerous advocates of the charter were Schwarz's staff members—paid out of city funds and assisted by foundation grants. Then there were the various public interest types who may have supported the charter because of hope of personal advancement—hopes already being realized; still other advocates were no doubt sincerely persuaded by coverage in *The New York Times* (the only paper to cover the charter), which argued, against all evidence, that it improved city prospects for more democracy and less corruption.

I stand by the relevance of Schwarz's role as the Ford Foundation's attorney. How do we account for his getting the job as chair of the board of Ford's Fund for the City of New York in the 1970s? Not everyone gets to

What's going on?

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submit a résumé for such a job. Evidently, serving as Ford's attorney in the 1960s is not a random event in explaining the process. Of course it is customary posture for members of the power elite to hide behind secrecy and cry paranoia at critics. (F.C.N.Y.'s last public report covers the years 1981 through 1984.) But even paranoia, the outlook that everything is connected to everything else, is a more fruitful investigative hypothesis than the equally farfetched view that Schwarz propounds—ananoia, the notion that nothing is connected to anything else. Ananoia is hard to accept when Ford funds F.C.N.Y., and F.C.N.Y. funds Vera and Vera entities, and Schwarz winds up working for all of them. When Schwarz gets cronies like fellow F.C.N.Y. board member Joe Sullivan appointed to the Charter Revision Commission; when he lobbies for nonprofit tax breaks as the city's corporation counsel; when the charter shows the indelible stamp of nonprofit and foundation influence; and when foundations set up by the rich to affect public policy drive public policy in directions favorable to their interests.

Ananoia is also what inspires Schwarz's Homeric catalogue of charter supporters. I argued that you could explain support and opposition to the charter in terms of a battle between the Democratic Party machines (kleptocrats) and the real estate and financial interests closely allied with the foundations and the elite nonprofits (plutocrats). The charter abolished the Board of Estimate. And it was through the individual Borough Presidents on the Board of Estimate that the party machines had exercised their power—and exacted their price. The plutocrats have been trying to cut them out of their deals for decades. Of course there are exceptions, but by focusing on them, Schwarz is not trying to move us toward a better explanation but to prevent any explanation at all. Despite his best intentions, the exceptions he cites can help to establish the argument.

The Queens machine broke with the other four county Democratic organizations to support the charter because on balance Astoria Councilman Peter Vallone added more power as Speaker of the new City Council than Claire Schulman lost as Borough President.

It's also true that not all real estate and financial types supported the charter. Some developers argued that by needlessly prolonging the approval process the charter would make construction more costly. But besides one developer, Lew Rudin (who was not supported by his organization, the Association for a Better New York), Schwarz cannot cite a single business organization that opposed the charter. The New York Chamber of Commerce and the New York City Partnership, the premier business organizations in the city—dominated by real estate and financial interests—publicly supported it. They did so, evidently, because they felt that those with good connections and experienced lawyers could circumvent any increase in bureaucratic delays. And these costs were more than offset by destruction of borough government—a costly layer—and the vastly increased ability to obtain city land, especially waterfront land, directly from the city, without the possibility of intervention by any legislative body whatsoever. Not that the City Council can manage such increased power as it has gained from the charter.

It is more evident than ever that the deal Schwarz cut with Peter Vallone—if Vallone would support the charter, Schwarz would agree to keep his hands off the council's internal affairs—has saddled New York City with a Mexican-style legislature complete with its own silly dictator, Señor Vallone. As Jack Newfield points out, the political and legal standard set for council members exists far beneath the standard established for members of the old Board of Estimate. Here is a part-time legislature whose members openly advertise their real estate practices right next to their council offices; where members are paid extra for serving as "majority whip" when there is only one minority member; where this past fall only a single incumbent lost his seat. In this travesty of a legislative body, Vallone's first act as speaker of the part-time council was to increase his own emoluments, those of his staff and fellow council members and to raise "lulus" 45 percent: that, at the same time the incoming Mayor was calling for cutbacks of workers in city agencies. The second was to appoint what Mayor La Guardia used to call *cucarachas politicas* to the top committees. A true index of how supine this legislature is can be gleaned from this recent outrage: When Vallone's newly installed Education Committee chair denounced black and Latino parents for not caring about the education of their children, minority members struggled to find nice things to say about him for fear of offending his protector, El Magnifico, from whom all lulus flow.

So it is that through the public policy research produced by the big foundations, with political leadership from senior partners in the city's elite law firms, in the service of giant real estate and finance, New York City is reaching out to become the world capital of decay. To reverse that, New York City needs free elections and a multiparty system. The legacy of the Schwarz commission hasn't got us a flea hop closer to these goals. But who ever expected democracy to come wrapped in a package from F.A.O. Schwarz?

Robert Fitch

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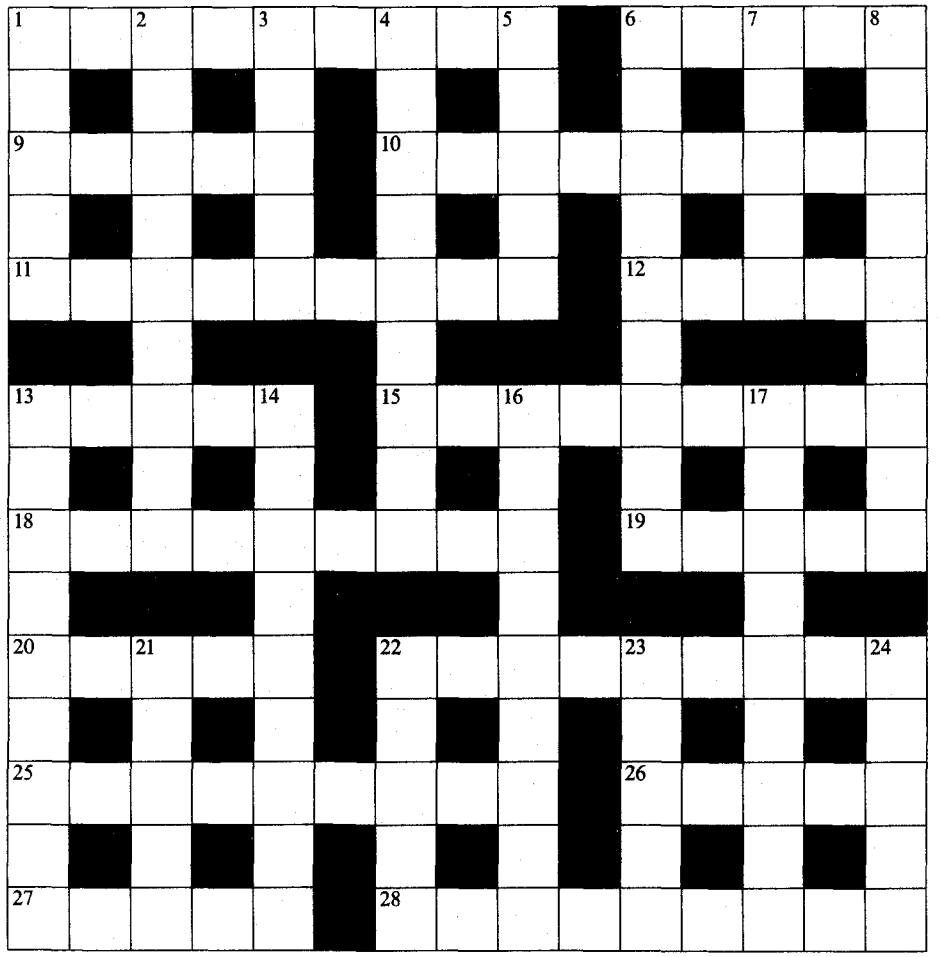

ACROSS

1 Found the cost, about to do what the doctor did. (9)
6 Played with a stream, having stockings on. (5)
9 Great confusion being part of the old defense? (The point of aim loses its square!) (5)
10 People who lead the simple life without reading, for example, would have had to emigrate. (9)
11 Quite conservative sorts have this grist ground. (9)
12 One who puts the money up in *Strangelove* worked out! (5)
13 Quite a bit to make up in this game? (Bismarck took fifty!) (5)
15 Fit with this in rough play, etc., as such. (9)
18 The American League in one country or another? (9)
19 One who had a poetic garden, according to R.L.S. (5)
20 and 28 What is not mine, in all honesty might be at the bottom of the page. (5,9)
22 Supposedly soft ware in art, perhaps. (9)
25 Giving the O.K. to a very quiet roaming around? (9)
26 Where the stamp of value might be put? (5)
27 Was Jack watching his cholesterol intake with a little fish? (5)
28 See 20

DOWN

1 Vegetarian whose first mate possibly suffered from shell shock? (5)
2 Annuls by authority, having got a baser job. (9)
3 What some little speakers are supposed to do? (5)
4 Authoritative rather than experimental. (9)
5 In a way, cuts the places for landing. (5)
6 Operated by the last part of 22. (9)
7 An informal speaker's language is bound to contain it. (5)
8 Shown to have passed on and turned out inside. (9)
13 Jump over such as 1985, 1986, 1987 and choose 1984 and 1988, for example. (4,5)
14 Gets in a mixup, or riots, or provides the basis for making things smell good! (5,4)
16 What one may be doing with a jalopy is sound as a bell in what carries the sleeper along. (7,2)
17 A newspaper boasts it has all such news, right close to the front in the arcade machine. (9)
21 But one might not want to sleep in part of the shoe! (5)
22 Were they split by one correctly considered presidential timber? (5)
23 We get around such as the prince with a superlative example. (5)
24 Game the British consider somewhat odd? (5)

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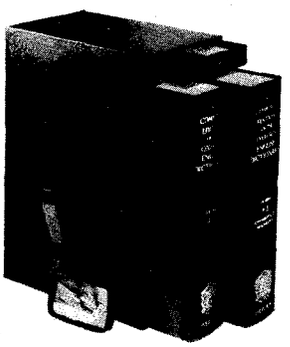

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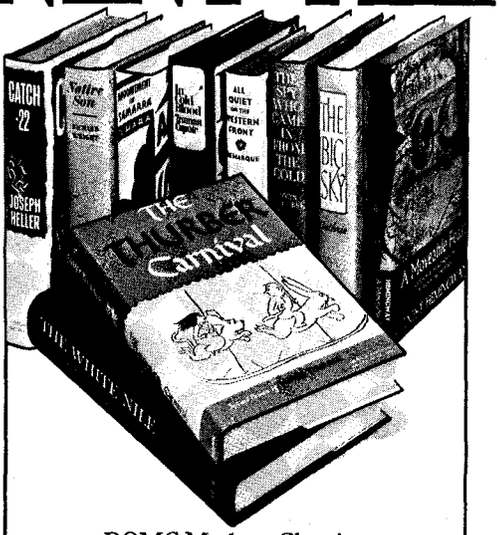

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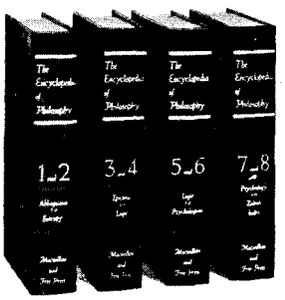

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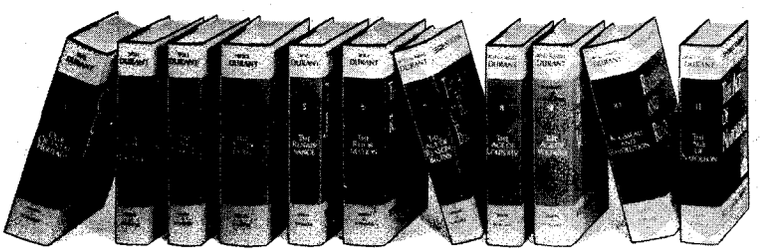

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